

# ERASMUS AND THE RENAISSANCE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

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VOLUME 24

# ERASMUS AND THE RENAISSANCE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

Proceedings of a Conference to Mark the Centenary  
of the Publication of the First Volume of *Erasmi Epistolae*  
by P. S. Allen, Corpus Christi College, Oxford,  
5–7 September 2006

Edited by  
Stephen Ryle

Foreword by  
Lisa Jardine



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## FOREWORD

Lisa Jardine

How fitting that the occasion at which the essays contained in the present volume were presented was the centenary of the publication of the first volume of P. S. Allen's great edition of the Latin letters, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*. As Stephen Ryle puts it in his Introduction:

Allen's edition of the letters marked the beginning of a fundamental reassessment of Erasmus both as a literary figure and as the outstanding representative of the most enduring aspects of Renaissance humanism.

For more than a century now, Erasmus studies have combed and excavated that edition in search of an ever-deeper understanding of the great humanist pedagogue, thinker, and polemicist. And since the 1990s, additional clues to our understanding have been discovered, by recognizing how self-consciously Erasmus himself shaped his correspondence to spread his ideas across Europe. His correspondence, we now recognize, was not simply a chronological record of events and thoughts: it was a staged version of the image Erasmus wanted to project of a new intellectual movement.

So the occasion of this volume is both a celebration and a new beginning. A number of contributions take the opportunity of further refining the insights and understanding to be had by close attention to the Latin letters. At the same time, as several of the contributors demonstrate, what we now know of Erasmus's own involvement in crafting his epistolary legacy gives us fresh opportunities to modify and add to Allen's brilliant achievement. Erasmus used his widely circulating letters and the published printed collections to fashion a self-conscious Europe-wide image for himself and his circle, as an intellectual and pedagogic example. Here is one small example.

In May 1520, Sir Thomas More wrote to Erasmus from England, informing him that he had arranged for Antony of Bergen, a former pupil of Juan Luis Vives in Louvain, to be tutored by ‘the famous Louvain scholar’, Adrianus Barlandus. Apparently Barlandus had been greatly impressed by the boy’s learning — a tribute to his teacher, Vives.

More goes on to describe how impressed he himself was when Antony of Bergen showed him examples of his former teacher Vives’s work:

I have never seen anything more elegant or more learned. How often do you find anyone — indeed have you so far ever found even one — who, at such a young age (for you write that he is still young) has so completely mastered the whole orbit of the disciplines? Indeed, my dear Erasmus, it puts me to shame that my colleagues and I pride ourselves on some rather unpolished book or other, when I see Vives, still so young, producing so many works, based on such thorough investigation, in such fluent language, out of such profound reading.<sup>1</sup>

The letter as a whole is a fine piece of epistolary elegance, prominently featuring the intellectual and humanistic credentials of Juan Luis Vives. Although More in fact already knew Vives — possibly well, since both were in Bruges in 1515 — he employs the fiction that here is a promising young scholar, not known to him personally, but whose merits are amply demonstrated by the examples of his work More has seen.<sup>2</sup> Other epistolary evidence, for example a 1517 letter from Erasmus to More, clearly establishes Vives’s association with the Erasmus/More circle by that date. So More’s letter is essentially a piece of promotional writing for his young colleague, designed to bring Vives’s work to a wider audience.

Nor is it just More who is misleadingly represented in the May 1520 letter as not being acquainted with the young Vives. The encounter between Barlandus and his new pupil is also reported as if Barlandus had no prior knowledge of Vives or his accomplishments. But Barlandus and Vives had been close colleagues since Vives’s arrival in Louvain in 1517. In his *Versuum ex poetarum principe Vergilio proverbialium collectanea* (Paris, 1517), Barlandus recalls:

In Louvain at that time it seemed to me that our native studies had been somewhat restored, through the diligence of that friend of mine, most learned Latinist, Juan Luis Vives, of Spanish origin, who by his daily teaching awoke the Latin muses there.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1106, 22–30. For the letter, see Vives, *Against the Pseudodialecticians*, trans. by Guerlac, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> For the evidence concerning Vives’s movements during this period, see IJsewijn, ‘J. L. Vives in 1512–1517’.

<sup>3</sup> IJsewijn, ‘J. L. Vives in 1512–1517’, p. 82.

The letter from More to Erasmus, and Erasmus's reply, appeared in print for the first time in late 1520, in a volume of Erasmus's letters collected and edited by Barlandus himself, *Epistolae aliquot selectae ex Erasmicis per Hadrianum Barlandum*. Allen argues convincingly that this volume was put together with Erasmus's co-operation and approval as a schoolbook.<sup>4</sup> It appeared eight months or so before the *Epistolae D. Erasmi Roterodami ad diversos [...] ex ingentibus fasciculis schedarum collectae*, and contained two letters never reprinted. The Barlandus volume therefore performed two functions simultaneously: it was Barlandus's own testimony to his relationship with the great Erasmus, and it was a pedagogic volume authored by Erasmus himself. The prominent praise for Vives, and his careful association with Louvain, More, and Erasmus therefore takes on something of the air of a propaganda exercise, particularly when we include Erasmus's reply, published in the same volume:

You speak of Luis Vives's gifts, and I am delighted to find my estimate confirmed by yours. He is one of that band of people who will put the name of Erasmus in the shade.<sup>5</sup>

As I argued in *Erasmus, Man of Letters* in 1993, Erasmus was adept at master-minding printed volumes of his letters. Even so, the Barlandus volume, ghosted at a distance by Erasmus himself, who supplies Barlandus with corrected copies of some of the letters, is among the most carefully contrived of them all. Allen takes literally Erasmus's disclaimer of involvement in the volume, and therefore excludes it from his list of definitive editions of the *epistolae Erasmi*, even though he is prepared to include other volumes openly put together by Peter Gilles and Beatus Rhenanus. Yet the internal evidence of the letters shows plainly the traces of Erasmus's involvement: recensions of some of the letters Barlandus publishes depend upon additional corrections made by Erasmus after the edition from which Barlandus is supposedly working, supposedly without Erasmus's involvement, was published.

Moreover, one of Erasmus's letters published in the collection, and never subsequently reprinted by Erasmus, contains a reluctant endorsement of the project:

<sup>4</sup> 'In the preface Barland states that Martens had requested him to select some of the shorter letters "ex magno epistolarum Erasmi volumine", for publication as a schoolbook. The "magnum volumen" is, of course, the *Farrago*, which had appeared in October 1519. Of the 123 letters which the selection contains, 115 are derived from [*Farrago*], 6 are not in [*Farrago*] but appear in the *Epistolae ad diversos*, Aug. 1521, and two [letters to Barlandus] are not found elsewhere than in this volume of selections'. (Allen III, Appendix 12, pp. 627–29).

<sup>5</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1107, 6–8.

No doubt you have been careful to choose only those letters which have nothing damaging about them, for you can see how certain people nowadays take offence at the slightest opportunity. All the same, I could have wished that you had thought of something else; for I am afraid they will be annoyed by the very fact that they see something of mine prepared to be read in schools.<sup>6</sup>

It is because of Allen's editorial commitment to the transparent truthfulness of Erasmus's correspondence that he omits the Barlandus volume from his list of definitive editions of the letters. It is a tribute to the quality of his edition that we can now recognize the fictions and evasions that sometimes shape the published letters, as Allen did not, and yet continue to depend entirely on his extraordinary edition as the infrastructure upon which all further scholarly work will surely be built.

This is what makes the *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami* such a rich source for explorations of Erasmus and his world. Within the carefully crafted correspondence are to be found a dense skein of Ariadne's threads, which teased out and assiduously followed will lead the scholar to fresh insights into the great Low Countries humanist. That is what the scholars whose work is contained in this volume have achieved, carrying Erasmus studies forward, via Allen's magisterial contribution, into the twenty-first century. It is an honour to provide them with a Foreword.

<sup>6</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1163. 1–5.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Allen *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. by P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, 12 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906–58)
- Alost 1973 *Dirk Martens 1473–1973: Tentoonstelling over het werk, de persoon en het milieu van Dirk Martens, ingericht bij de herdenking van het verschijnen te Aalst in 1473 van het eerste gedrukte boek in de Zijdelijke Nederlanden*, ed. by Kamiel Heireman (Alost: Stedelijk Museum-Oud Hospitaal, 1973)
- ASD *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. by J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink and others (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1969–94; Amsterdam: Elsevier: 1994–97; Leiden: Brill, 1997–)
- BOL *Martini Bucer Opera omnia, Series 2, Opera Latina*, ed. by Cornelis Augustijn and others, 5 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1982–2000)
- Bruxelles 1969 *Érasme et la Belgique: Exposition organisée à l'occasion du cinq centième anniversaire de la naissance d'Érasme, Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale Albert Ier, du 4 juin au 13 juillet 1969 [et] Louvain, Musée de la Ville, du 17 novembre au 15 décembre 1969*, éd. par Marie-Thérèse Lenger (Bruxelles: Bibliothèque royale Albert Ier, 1969)
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- Copinger Walter Arthur Copinger, *Supplement to Hain's Repertorium Bibliographicum: Or, Collections towards a New Edition of That Work*, 2 vols (London: Sotheran, 1895–1902)
- CW *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, ed. by Richard S. Sylvester and others, 15 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963–97)

- CWC* *The Correspondence of Wolfgang Capito*, ed. and trans. by Erika Rummel, with the assistance of Milton Kooistra (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005–)
- CWE* *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974–)
- ERSY* *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* (1981–)
- Ferguson *Erasmi Opuscula: A Supplement to the Opera Omnia*, ed. by Wallace K. Ferguson (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1933)
- Goff Frederick R. Goff, *Incunabula in American Libraries: A Third Census of Fifteenth Century Books Recorded in North American Collections, Reproduced from the Annotated Copy Maintained by Frederick R. Goff* (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1964; supplement, 1972)
- Holborn *Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. by Hajo Holborn and Annemarie Holborn (München: Beck, 1964; orig. publ. 1933)
- ILE* *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, ed. by Alois Gerlo and others (Brussel: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 1978–)
- LB* *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia*, ed. by Jean Le Clerc, 10 vols (Leiden: Vander Aa, 1703–06)
- NK Wouter Nijhoff and M. E. Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche Bibliographie van 1500 tot 1540*, 8 vols (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1923–71)
- Renouard Philippe Renouard, *Les Marques typographiques parisiennes des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Champion, 1926–28)
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- WA* *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–)
- WA Br* *D. Martin Luthers Werke, Briefwechsel*, 15 vols (Weimar: Böhlau, 1930–78)
- ZW* *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Emil Egli and others, 14 vols, *Corpus Reformatorum*, 88–101 (München: Kraus, 1981; orig. publ. Berlin: Schwetschke, 1905–66)

## INTRODUCTION

Stephen Ryle

The idea of holding a conference to mark the centenary of the publication of the first volume of P. S. Allen's edition of the *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami* arose from a sense that the work described by one of Allen's contemporaries as 'the finest achievement of a single scholar in recent European learning'<sup>1</sup> deserved proper commemoration, and that the event should be celebrated by taking as broad as possible an overview of the current state of Erasmus studies, with particular attention paid to the letters, but also embracing the influence of Erasmus on the literature and thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and beyond. It seemed appropriate to hold the conference at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, the college founded by Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, in 1517 to promote the study of classical learning (*bonae litterae*), an aim warmly supported by Erasmus. Allen had been an undergraduate at the college and as the climax of his career became its president. The college generously supported the occasion with a grant from its Charles Oldham Fund, and further funds were made available by the Faculty of Classics at Oxford and by the Society for Renaissance Studies.

The publication in 1906 of the first volume of Allen's edition marked the beginning of a new era in Renaissance scholarship. Until the appearance of Allen's work students of European intellectual history and of the origins and progress of the Reformation during Erasmus's lifetime — developments in which Erasmus himself had played a central role — had no alternative but to make use of incomplete collections of his letters, compiled more than two

<sup>1</sup> F. M. Powicke, communication to *The Times*, 27 June 1933. See Schoeck, 'From Lachmann to P. S. Allen', p. 831.

centuries earlier and hopelessly confused in their chronology. Allen's edition placed the study of Erasmus and his era on a new basis, revealing the humanist's development from youthful champion of *bonae litterae* to biblical scholar and theologian, and his final position as anguished advocate of peace and unity in a politically and religiously fragmented Europe. Allen did not live to see his work completed: he died in 1933, before the eighth volume was published, and the project was continued by his wife, Helen Mary Allen, and his Oxford colleague H. W. Garrod, who together saw the eleventh and final volume of the correspondence through the press in 1947 (an Index volume was added in 1958).

Two aspects of Allen's achievement stand out as especially remarkable. The first derives from his individual merits as a scholar. Trained as a classicist at Corpus, he turned after graduation to the study of the Renaissance, tempted first by the prospect of an essay prize on the subject of Erasmus and later inspired by the lectures of J. A. Froude, the Regius Professor of Modern History.<sup>2</sup> As an undergraduate Allen had learned the discipline of textual criticism from Henry Nettleship, the Corpus Professor of Latin. He studied medieval palaeography with Charles Plummer, the editor of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, and also attended the university lectures of Falconer Madan on the subject in 1894.<sup>3</sup> His expertise as a bibliographer owed much to the advice and influence of Ingram Bywater, the Regius Professor of Greek. The successful completion of his work, however, was due principally to his own dedication and self-discipline. He possessed, in the words of Garrod, 'a sense for method amounting to genius'.<sup>4</sup> The distinguishing feature that marks out his edition from all other published letter-collections up to his time and beyond is the detailed information that it gives about the lives and careers of the individuals mentioned in the correspondence. This aspect of his work, evident from the first page of the initial volume, represents the fruit of his tireless research into rare printed books of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and into the entire range of European scholarship devoted to that period. With the appearance of Allen's edition students of Erasmus were given access not only to an authoritative text but also to a wealth of information, unrivalled in its accuracy and scope, contained in the introductions and notes to the letters. Even after the passage of more than a hundred years it is still true to say that Allen's edition is an indispensable starting point for researchers in the field of the literary and religious history of late fifteenth and early sixteenth century Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus*.

<sup>3</sup> See Schoeck, 'From Lachmann to P. S. Allen', p. 835 and p. 837, n. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Garrod, 'Percy Stafford Allen (1869–1933)', p. 385. Cf. Mansfield, *Interpretations of Erasmus*, p. 355.

The crucial departure from earlier editions of the letters of Erasmus came with Allen's decision to use a chronological basis for their arrangement. Previous collections of the letters had been published as examples of literary art. Although many of the letters contained material of great historical importance, no attention had been paid by the earlier editors to this aspect of their composition. With the advance of more scientific methods of historical research during the nineteenth century scholars had been left increasingly frustrated at the lack of a secure chronological context for the study of the letters. Allen's edition effectively laid these problems to rest from the moment of the appearance of his first volume.<sup>5</sup>

The other aspect of the edition that deserves special comment is the close involvement of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press in seeing the project through to publication. It no doubt helped that the Secretary to the Delegates, Charles Cannan, though eleven years older than Allen, had attended the same school, Clifton College, and had also been an undergraduate at Corpus. Allen first put his proposal for an edition to the Press in the summer of 1898, while on leave in England from his post as professor of history at Government College, Lahore. Before returning to India he was invited, in accordance with a resolution of the delegates, to discuss the project with Thomas Fowler, the President of Corpus, and William Stubbs, bishop of Oxford and a predecessor of Froude as Regius Professor of Modern History. Both Fowler and Stubbs were delegates. Cannan later replied in guarded terms to Allen's proposal, but revealed that 'one or two' of the delegates had 'even undertaken a certain amount of research' in connexion with the specimen notes that Allen had been asked to submit. He made it clear that the delegates considered it essential for Allen to have access to 'a great library'. A resolution had been passed that he should be asked to renew his proposal after he had returned to Europe. Cannan concluded by assuring him that 'the Delegates take an interest in the letters and your plan'.<sup>6</sup> It was another of the delegates, Bywater, whose actions played the greatest part in prompting Cannan's words. From the outset Bywater to a large extent made the Erasmus project his own, devoting minute care to every aspect of Allen's work on both text and annotation of the first three published volumes. Bywater was later to describe Allen as 'the most learned man in Oxford'; for his part Allen to the end of his life revered Bywater as his 'master'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Allen may possibly have found a partial model for his approach in the edition of Cicero, *Correspondence*, ed. by Tyrrell and Purser.

<sup>6</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Allen 161, fol. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Garrod, 'Percy Stafford Allen (1869–1933)', pp. 390–91.

When Allen and his wife finally returned to Oxford in 1901 they resumed the intensive programme of research in major European libraries that he had begun before leaving for India. In November of the following year Allen formally resubmitted his proposal for the publication of the first two volumes, setting out in detail the extent of his research up to that point, the principles he had followed in establishing the text of the letters, and the method of presentation he would use to indicate the publication history of each individual letter. He also informed the Press of the existence of a rival project to edit the letters by a German scholar, supported by the Berlin Academy.<sup>8</sup> This and another project by an Austrian editor were forestalled by the early deaths of those who had undertaken them. However, even after taking all these considerations into account it was still a considerable gamble on the part of the Press to entrust such a large-scale project to a researcher who did not possess a college fellowship or any other academic post at the university (it was only in 1908 that Allen was awarded a fellowship at the neighbouring college of Merton). When writing to him shortly before the date of publication of the first volume Cannan remarked '[t]he Delegates are very brave.'<sup>9</sup> Their courage was to be thoroughly vindicated as the successive volumes issued from the press. Allen's fellow Erasmian scholars recognized the scale of his achievement immediately. On receiving his copy of the first volume Ferdinand Vander Haeghen, the Librarian of Ghent University Library and eminent co-author of the *Bibliotheca Erasmiana*, with whom Allen had been in correspondence since 1893 and who had himself harboured the intention of publishing a new edition of the letters, instantly yielded the prize to the younger scholar, declaring 'Vous nous avez donné une édition définitive du "Epistolar" d'Érasme.'<sup>10</sup> His verdict remains true to this day, and seems likely to do so for many years to come.

The first three papers in this volume all reflect in their different ways the continuing influence of Allen's edition. Michel Magnien has restored to the scholarly world after nearly five hundred years the opening passage of one of the most important letters in the entire corpus of Erasmus's correspondence, Ep. 2021, the letter in which Germain de Brie appeals to Erasmus to mollify the sense of outrage felt among French humanists as a result of Erasmus's disparaging reference to Guillaume Budé in the *Ciceronianus*.<sup>11</sup> In making the rediscovered text available

<sup>8</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Allen 161, fols 5–14.

<sup>9</sup> See Sutcliffe, *The Oxford University Press*, p. 169.

<sup>10</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Allen 242, fol. 108.

<sup>11</sup> Allen VII, pp. 434–38.

Magnien also sheds new light on the *Selectae aliquot epistolae* (Allen's 'G'), the collection of five previously unpublished letters printed by Froben in September 1528, at whose head Erasmus placed Ep. 2021 in its truncated form. Christine Bénévent has performed the valuable service of listing not only the letters in Allen that subsequent research has shown need to be redated but also, and most importantly, those letters to and from Erasmus that have been brought to light since Allen's edition was completed. Her paper goes on to advocate the setting up of a digital version of Allen to meet the needs of the electronic age, enabling greater accessibility and flexibility in the use of text than scholars have been able to enjoy up to now. This is a challenge that extends beyond the letters to the works of Erasmus as a whole. James McConica's paper makes it clear that the correspondence formed the foundation of the project sponsored by the University of Toronto Press to translate the *Collected Works of Erasmus* into English, and that Allen's edition was the inevitable choice as the base text.

The second group of papers is concerned with the relations between Erasmus and a number of his contemporaries. Silvana Seidel Menchi makes an important contribution to the continuing debate over the authorship of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis* by focusing on the role of Ulrich von Hutten in its publication, and using the coded evidence of the *Spongia* to strengthen her argument. Clare Murphy analyses the letters in which Erasmus portrays the character and virtues of Thomas More and his family, beginning with the famous Ep. 999, addressed — inappropriately, as Erasmus later recognized — to Hutten. Alexandre Vanautgaerden shows that Dirk Martens, though a trusted friend and collaborator of Erasmus, cannot be regarded as a scholar printer comparable to Aldus Manutius, Josse Bade, or the members of the Estienne dynasty. He also prints the texts of all the letters to the reader that Martens attached to his publications: more than half of these letters accompany works by Erasmus, leaving open the possibility, to put it no higher, that several of them may have been ghost-written by Erasmus himself. Charles Fantazzi's survey of the correspondence between Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives provides an instructive example of Erasmus's behaviour towards younger scholars whose merits seemed to pose a threat to his pre-eminence among humanists. The two remaining papers in this section illustrate Erasmus's increasing isolation from about 1520 onwards, attacked from both sides of the religious divide during the critical years of the Reformation. Erika Rummel reveals the extent of Wolfgang Capito's duplicity as he moved towards unreserved support of Luther while at the same time attempting to convince Erasmus that he should still be counted among the adherents of the papacy; and Marie Barral-Baron, in her discussion of the exchanges between Erasmus and Duke George of Saxony, argues that Erasmus's apparent vacillation before he eventually decided



to confront Luther in print was due not to moral cowardice but to his judgement, based on knowledge of patristic sources and his understanding of church history, about the most appropriate method of dealing with heretical movements.

In the third group of papers we move from discussion of the relationships, personal and controversial, encountered by Erasmus during his lifetime to the treatment of wider literary and philosophic questions. Romano Ruggeri, after discussing the unresolved dispute between Erasmus and Polydore Vergil over the priority of their respective collections of proverbs (a quarrel which did not harm their mutual friendship), highlights the common ideals of the two humanists, their shared aim of promoting *bonae litterae* as the basis of civilized life, and their desire to deepen their readers' understanding of the Christian religion. Ari Wesseling also refers to the dispute between Erasmus and Polydore, but broadens his discussion to include more general aspects of the attitudes of Renaissance scholars towards unacknowledged literary borrowing. Catherine Langlois-Pézeret shows how Étienne Dolet's attitude towards Erasmus changed from outright hostility before the great man's death to admiration, initially half-hearted but later more generous, after it. She goes on to illustrate the fruitful influence of Erasmian themes and in particular of allusions to the *Adages* on Dolet's *Carmina*. Béatrice Périgot begins her paper by measuring the *Colloquies* against the criteria set out for dialogue as a literary genre by Carlo Sigonio and Torquato Tasso later in the sixteenth century, and continues with a discussion both of their 'familiar' character and of their frequent use of irony in the tradition of Lucian; in so doing she draws attention to their dangerous ambivalence. Hanan Yoran, drawing his evidence from some of the most important of the *Adages*, first illustrates Erasmus's intellectual detachment from any of the ideologies and forms of government that prevailed among the states of his time, and then goes on to make clear how isolated his independence left him, especially in his passionate advocacy of peace between nations. Isabelle Diu's study of the problems faced by Renaissance translators from Greek into Latin reveals Erasmus's progress from scrupulous fidelity to the original text in his early efforts to greater freedom as his confidence grew, and proceeds to a discussion of his views on the fundamental purpose of language, set out in the *Lingua* and ultimately in the *Ecclesiastes*. In the final paper of this section Jeanine De Landtsheer traces the parallels between the correspondence of Erasmus and that of his greatest successor among the humanists of the Low Countries, Justus Lipsius, the four hundredth anniversary of whose death occurred in 2006. She shows how *bonae litterae* and theology, the twin pillars of Erasmus's vision of the humanist programme, had become almost completely divorced from each other by Lipsius's time, with the result that Lipsius prudently confined himself to classical scholarship. She also makes clear how much more



rounded a portrait of Lipsius as a human being is bequeathed to later generations by his surviving correspondence than is the case with Erasmus.

The fourth section is concerned chiefly with the influence of Erasmus's religious thought on his followers and opponents in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but the first paper links his own exegesis of the gospels with that of the church fathers, especially Jerome. Jane Phillips argues that in the extraordinary speech addressed by the risen Christ to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus towards the end of the *Paraphrase on Luke* Erasmus takes the closing section of his *Life of Jerome* as a structural model. Letizia Panizza's paper, in contrast, highlights one aspect of Christian teaching and practice where Erasmus differed radically from Jerome: that relating to marriage and celibacy. After referring to earlier writers who upheld the dignity of marriage and discussing the views of Erasmus as expressed in the *Encomium matrimonii* and some of the *Colloquies*, she focuses on the diametrically opposed positions of two of his younger Italian contemporaries, Ambrosius Catharinus and Celio Secondo Curione. The following two papers both concern the search for a *via media* inspired by Erasmian ideals. Dominic Baker-Smith examines Erasmus's treatment of free will, merit, and grace in the *De Concordia*, and shows the influence of his thinking on the *De animi tranquillitate* of the Scottish humanist Florens Wilson. After studying under Erasmus's friend Hector Boece at Aberdeen Wilson became associated with the circle of reformist Italians, especially from Lucca, who found refuge in Lyon. Gregory Dodds illustrates the survival of Erasmian ideas on toleration and concord in the works of two moderate Calvinists, Joseph Hall and Thomas Fuller, faced with an increasingly extremist Puritanism on the one hand and an uncompromising Arminianism on the other during the years leading up to the English civil war.

With Mark Vessey's concluding paper we return to the scholarly world of early twentieth-century Britain, specifically to the opinions of George Saintsbury, the dominant figure in English literary criticism at that period. Saintsbury portrayed Erasmus as an author who would have produced great literature if he had not been distracted by other concerns. Such a view illustrates the narrowing of the concept of the aims and scope of literature between the seventeenth century and the Victorian era. Allen's edition of the letters marked the beginning of a fundamental reassessment of Erasmus both as a literary figure and as the outstanding representative of the most enduring aspects of Renaissance humanism.

I am very grateful to Lisa Jardine for agreeing to contribute a foreword to the volume. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to former colleagues at the University of Leeds, Elizabeth Pender and Emma Stafford of the Department of Classics, who inspired me with the confidence that the pro-

ject could be brought to fruition, and Alec McAllister and Robert Sansam of Information Systems Services, who generously gave of their time with technical assistance in putting the volume together. Finally I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my wife Claire, who has been a constant source of support both in organizing the conference and throughout the process of publication.

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## Section I.

### P. S. Allen and Current Erasmian Scholarship



## SUPPLEMENTUNCULUM ALLENIANUM: LE DÉBUT DE L'EP. 2021 RETROUVÉ\*

Michel Magnien

Des échanges épistolaires entre Érasme et Germain de Brie (c. 1490–1538), l'admirable et irremplaçable travail de P. S. Allen nous donne aujourd'hui à lire vingt témoins, répartis sur les vingt dernières années de sa vie, de 1517 à 1536.<sup>1</sup> Comme on voit là mentionné l'envoi de maintes autres lettres aujourd'hui perdues, ces échanges entre les deux hommes ont assurément été plus fréquents, après avoir été directs. De Brie a en effet côtoyé Érasme à Venise dès 1508; et le grand humaniste a même fait alors l'honneur à ce jeune homme de moins de vingt ans d'accueillir trois pièces de sa composition au sein des liminaires de la prestigieuse édition aldine des *Adages*.<sup>2</sup> Interrompues pendant près de dix années après cette période où de Brie apprenait en Italie le grec sous Jean Lascaris, les relations, devenues épistolaires, ont été nourries et chaleureuses; pour preuve, après Budé, G. de Brie est le Français avec qui Érasme a le plus correspondu.

\* Je remercie très vivement pour leur amicale relecture et leurs suggestions Ch. Bénévent, G. Guillemainot, Fr Higman, J. Letrouit et A. Vanautgaerden.

<sup>1</sup> On compte douze lettres envoyées par Érasme (Allen III, Ep. 620; Allen IV, Ep. 1117; Allen VI, Epp. 1597, et 1736; Allen VII, Epp. 1835, 1910, 2046, et 2052; Allen VIII, Ep. 2291; Allen IX, Epp. 2379, 2422, et 2599) et huit par de Brie (Allen II, Ep. 569; Allen IV, Ep. 1045; Allen VI, Ep. 1733; Allen VII, Epp. 1817 et 2021; Allen VIII, Ep. 2340; Allen IX, Ep. 2405; Allen X, Ep. 2727).

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus, *Adagiorum Chiliades tres*, f. B8<sup>v</sup>. Ces poèmes encomiastiques (115 hendécasyllabes latins, deux distiques, puis un distique grecs) ont récemment été édités et commentés par Vanautgaerden, 'Flosculi Erasmi VII'.

Parmi les huit lettres issues de la plume de G. de Brie recueillies par P. S. Allen, il en est une, la lettre n° 2021, rédigée au moment de la crise provoquée à Paris par la publication du *Ciceronianus* au printemps 1528,<sup>3</sup> qui, de façon étrange, se trouve privée de sa première partie.<sup>4</sup> La chose n'a échappé ni aux éditeurs de l'*Opus epistolarum* de 1529, qui font précéder l'adresse de la mention '*Epistolae fragmentum*',<sup>5</sup> ni bien entendu à P. S. Allen, qui dans la longue introduction à cette même lettre relève sans pouvoir l'expliquer 'the truncation of Ep. 2021 in both',<sup>6</sup> c'est-à-dire dans les deux premières éditions qu'a connues ce texte en 1528. En fait, cette lettre de G. de Brie, portant sur un sujet brûlant au sein de la *Respublica literarum*, ne s'est pas vue imprimer moins de cinq fois en moins d'une année.

Il ne sera pas inutile de donner ici le détail de ces éditions d'autant que l'une, un *unicum* qui a échappé à la sagacité d'Allen et de tous ses successeurs, devra particulièrement retenir notre attention:

1. SELECTAE || ALIQVOT EPISTOLAE DES. ERASMI || Roterodami nunquam antehac euulgatae. || Au colophon (f. K4<sup>r</sup>): BASILEAE APVD IO. HERVAGIVM || ET HIERONYMV FROBENIVM || M. D. XXVIII. || In 4°, sign. a–k par 4 [exemplaire consulté: BnF. Z 3173]. L'Ep. 2021, publiée ici pour la première fois, se trouve en première position, f. A2<sup>r</sup>–B<sup>v</sup>. Ce bref recueil présente cinq lettres inédites, rédigées depuis moins d'un an: Allen VII, Epp. 2021 (de G. de Brie), 2046 (à de Brie), 1891 (à J. Gachi), 2037 (à J. Longland), & 2045 (à M. Lips). L'impression, débutée au plus tôt le

<sup>3</sup> On sait que dans le grand catalogue final (lui-même parodie du *Brutus* de Cicéron) les personnages du dialogue érasmien comparaient Josse Bade à Budé et mettaient le premier au-dessus de second: *inde ira* [...] Cet incident mit fin aux relations entre Érasme et Budé, qui laissa sans réponse la lettre d'explication rédigée par Érasme à son adresse (Allen VII, Ep. 2047, début sept. 1528) — et apparemment, au témoignage de proches, sans même l'avoir ouverte: J. Thousat/Tusanus révélera à Érasme que Budé 'a conservé deux ans entiers chez lui deux lettres [d'Érasme] sans les décacheter'. (Allen IX, Ep. 2449. 68–70). Budé eut en effet la rancune tenace. En témoigne J. Sphyractès; après avoir rendu visite à Budé en janv. 1531, il confie à Amerbach (*Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, éd. par Hartmann, IV: *Die Briefe aus den Jahren 1531–1536* (1953), p. 11; Ep. 1490, 47–48): 'Budaeus visus est parum amice ac candide et sentire et pronunciare de D. Erasmo [...]'. Sur cette 'affaire' du *Ciceronianus*, v. *La Correspondance d'Érasme et de Guillaume Budé*, éd. par de la Garanderie, pp. 263–65 (v. aussi p. 43) et McNeil, *Guillaume Budé and Humanism*, pp. 71–75.

<sup>4</sup> Allen VII, Ep. 2021 (pp. 434–38), envoyée de Gentilly le 12 août 1528. La traduction française, souvent tributaire, comme ici, de l'édition Allen, n'apporte aucun élément nouveau: v. Erasmus, *Correspondance*, éd. par Gerlo VII: 1527–1528 (1978), p. 515.

<sup>5</sup> Voir Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum*, p. 899.

<sup>6</sup> Allen VII, p. 434 (l. 32 de la notice).

6 sept., date de la lettre d'Érasme à de Brie, est achevée le 16 sept., jour où un exemplaire en est envoyé à P. Decimarius (Allen VII, Ep. 2050. 6–7).

2. EPISTOLAE DVAE: || GERMANI BRIXII ALTE=||ra, altera Erasmi Roterodami, qua calum=||niam à suo Ciceroniano depellit, quam illi || à quibusdam intentari ex Brixij literis intel||lexit, quasi scilicet Badium Budæo, loco quo||dam, quod ad eloquentiam attinet, serio || prætulit. || LVTECIAE. || apud Christianum Vuchel. || Anno. M. D. XXVIII.. || Au colophon (f. 14<sup>v</sup>): Excudebat Simon Siluius; au verso du f. suiv. [b 7] première marque de Ch. Wechel [Silvestre n° 820; Renouard 1110]. In-8° de 16 ff. numérotés de 2 à 14, sign. A–b [par 8] [exemplaires consultés: Arsenal 8° S. 11525 (1): voir annexe 1; BnF, Rés. p. Z 2374 (1); S<sup>te</sup> Geneviève 8° Z 229 Inv. 228 Rés. (3)].<sup>7</sup> Comme l'a établi Allen, le texte de cette édition partielle dérive directement des *Selectae aliquot epistolae* dont elle ne retient que les deux premières lettres (Allen VII, Epp. 2021 et 2046): pour le public parisien, tout particulièrement visé ici, seul est pour l'instant (v. ci-dessous, 2 bis) conservé l'échange entre Brie et Érasme autour de Budé; l'Ep. 2021 se retrouve ici en première position, f. 2<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>r</sup>.

- 2bis. APOLOGIA || MONASTICAE RELI-||gionis diluens nugas || Erasmi, à Lodo||uico Carvaïalo || Minorita || aedita || [grand fer aldin] || Item epistolae aliquot Erasmi Roterodami sane quam elegantissimae, quas nuper || in lucem emisit. || ANNO 1529. || In-8° de 56 ff. chiffrés; aucun colophon [exemplaire consulté: Sainte-Geneviève 8° D 4243 inv. 5256. Rés. (3)]. Moreau, *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes*, III, n° 1678, attribue à juste titre cette impression à Simon Du Bois.<sup>8</sup> L'Apologia de

<sup>7</sup> Cet exemplaire donne un état postérieur et plus correct du texte par rapport aux ex. de la BnF et de l'Arsenal; par exemple, au f. 5<sup>v</sup>, il présente trois corrections sur forme, alors que les deux autres contiennent trois coquilles à la l. 4 (\*Clceronianum), à la l. 8 (Nosoponi pour Nosopono) et à la l. 14 (\*inqua pour iniqua).

<sup>8</sup> On reconnaît aisément son élégante italique (Ital. 85, type 5 d'après Clutton, 'Simon Du Bois of Paris and Alençon', p. 126a); la lettrine *V* aux deux putti [30x30 mm = Clutton, Alph. 1] qui marque le début de l'*Apologia* au f. 5<sup>r</sup>, est celle-là même qui ouvrait la lettre tronquée de G. de Brie en 1528; au f. 41<sup>v</sup>, la lettre à Longland s'ouvre sur une lettrine *O* [14x14 mm = Clutton, Alph. 9] utilisée en 1528 dans son impression des *Epistolae medicinales* de Manardi (f. A7<sup>r</sup>). Mais contrairement à ce que dit la notice 1678 du Renouard, il y a bien eu à Paris début 1529 deux impressions successives et différentes du texte de Carvajal. Une première impression a été donnée par Du Bois de l'*Apologia* seule: APOLOGIA || MONASTICAE RELI-||gionis diluens nugas || Erasmi, à Lodo||uico Carvaïalo || Minorita || aedita || [grand fer aldin] || Anno 1529. || In-8° de 32ff. numérotés à partir du f. 3; sign. A–D par 8, pas de colophon (Arsenal 8 T 9010;

Carvajal s'achève au f. 29<sup>v</sup> et après l'appareil postliminaire du f. D6, dû à Juan de Zafra également signataire de la lettre-préface au général de l'ordre des Franciscains, Francisco Quignon (v. Allen VIII, Ep. 2126. 6n.), deux feuillets entièrement blancs la séparent des lettres d'Érasme. Les trois lettres écartées à l'automne 1528 lors de la première impression des *Epistolae duae* sont ici réimprimées avec grand soin dans le même ordre que dans l'édition bâloise des *Selectae aliquot epistolae*:<sup>9</sup> Ep. 1891 à Gachi (f. 33<sup>r</sup>–41<sup>r</sup>), puis Ep. 2037 à Longland (f. 41<sup>v</sup>–48<sup>v</sup>, avec la même erreur dans l'en-tête et les titres courants), et enfin Ep. 2045 à M. Lips (f. 49<sup>v</sup>–56<sup>v</sup>).

3. EPISTOLAE || DVAE: GERMANI BRIXII || altera, altera Erasmi Roterodami, qua || calumniam à suo Ciceroniano depellit, quam || sibi a quibusdam intentari ex Brixij lite=||ris intellexerat, quasi Badium Budæo, lo||co quodam, quod ad eloquentiam attinet, || prætulisse visus fuisset. ||

Mazarine 24102 (6), ex. incomplet des f. D4–D8). Le f. 29<sup>v</sup> présente une formule de salutation à Dieu et à la Vierge suivie de huit lignes d'*errata* qui disparaissent de la seconde impression, intégrant, elle, les trois lettres d'Érasme, annoncées désormais au titre que nous avons transcrit en 2bis.

Notons qu'il s'agit bien d'une réimpression et pas d'une seconde émission: les neuf *errata* de la première impression ont tous été intégrés dans la nouvelle composition, et de nombreuses pages prouvent une recomposition en particulier au f. A. iijr, la dédicace de Carvajal à Don Lorenzo Suarez de Figueroa qui s'ouvrait dans la première édition sur une lettrine *T* à fond criblé de grande taille (36x36) n'appartenant pas au matériel de Du Bois ('Tam vehemens odium adversus sacras religiones concepit Erasmus [...]') a été remplacée, au prix d'une interversion ('Odium tam vehemens [...]') par une lettrine *O* aux putti (30x30 mm = Clutton, Alph. 1); comptant 23 lignes dans la première éd., cette page n'en compte désormais plus que 22; seules les dix dernières lignes sont composées à l'identique. La comparaison attentive de l'exemplaire Arsenal 8 T 9010 avec un ex. de la seconde impression (Arsenal 8 T 9009) permet de découvrir un grand nombre de différences entre les deux compositions dans l'utilisation ou non de ligatures, dans les titres courants ou la numérotation des feuillets, mais aussi dans la disposition des césures (au f. 10r les doubles tirets de césure sont remplacés par des barres obliques; v. disposition de la manchette au f. 21r), voire dans l'utilisation des lettrines: le f. 30r s'ouvre par un *I* qui n'appartient pas à la même série dans les deux exemplaires.

C'est sans aucun doute dans un exemplaire de cette première édition parisienne, qu'Érasme, qui la décrit dans le début d'une de ses lettres à A. Valdès ('libellus clam absque typographi nomine excussus Lutetiae'), a lu l'*Apologia* de Carvajal (v. Allen VIII, Ep. 2126. 1–20; du 21 mars 1529); s'il avait eu en mains la seconde édition parisienne, il aurait sans doute relevé la présence pour le moins étrange de trois de ses lettres au bout de ce 'libellus, protector scilicet hierarchici ordinis, tam stultus tamque scurrilis' (Allen VIII, Ep. 2110. 25–26; à J. Henckel, du 26 fév 1529).

<sup>9</sup> Une coquille de l'éd. bâloise *\*exsibilitati* (Allen VII, Ep. 2045. 22), y trouve même une correction vraisemblable en *exibitati* (f. 49<sup>v</sup>, l. 1).



LVTECIAE. || apud Christianum Vuechel. || Anno. M. D. XXIX. || au colophon (f. 14<sup>v</sup>): Excudebat Simon Siluius; au verso du f. suiv. [b 7] première marque de Ch. Wechel [Silvestre n° 820; Renouard 1110]. In-8° de 16 ff. numérotés de 2 à 14, sign. A–b [par 8] [unicum consulté: BnF, Rés. X 2446: v. annexe 2]. Réimpression au moins partielle (v. *infra*, n. 15) de l'éd. Wechel de 1528. Elle date au plus tard d'avril/mai 1529, moment où Du Bois quitte Paris pour s'installer sur les terres de Marguerite de Navarre, à Alençon.<sup>10</sup> L'Ep. 2021 occupe toujours la première position, f. [a]<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>v</sup>.

4. SELECTAE || ALIQUOT EPISTOLAE DES. || Erasmi Roterodami, nunquam ante hac || euulgatae. || In quibus est iucunda diuersarum rerum uarietas, || eruditio locuples, & singularis facundia. || Prima: Germani Brixii ad Erasmus. || Secunda: Erasmi ad Germanum Brixium Archidiaconum. || Tertia: Erasmi ad D. Io. Gac. conseruum & commili- || tonem in Christo. || Quarta: R. P. D. Io. G. || Quinta: Erasmi ad Mart. Lip. || Anno M.D.XXIX. || Au colophon (f. e[iv]<sup>v</sup>): Coloniae in aedibus honesti civis Petri Quentell. || Anno M.D.XXIX. || In 4°, sign. a–e par 4 [exemplaire consulté:<sup>11</sup> Oxford, Bodleian B 26–28(7) Linc.]. Même si le titre en diffère (cf. 1.), cette édition dérive directement de l'éd. or. de sept. 1528, comme le montre la reprise dans la table des matières des titres courants de l'éd. or., jusque dans l'erreur d'adresse pour la 4<sup>e</sup> lettre (Allen VII, Ep. 2037), adressée en fait à Longland, et non à J. G[achi]. L'Ep. 2021 y occupe donc encore la première position, f. [a]<sup>r</sup>–aiij<sup>r</sup>.

5. OPVS EPISTOLARVM || DES. ERASMI ROTERODAMI PER AVTOREM || DILIGENTER RECOGNITVM, ET ADIECTIS || innumeris nouis, fere ad trientem auctum. || BASILEAE EX OFFICINA FROBENIANA || ANNO M. D. XXIX. || Au colophon (f. K4<sup>r</sup>): BASILEAE APVD HIERONYMV FROBENIVM ET IOANNEM HERVAGIVM || ET NICOLAVM EPISCOPIVM || In fol. [exemplaire consulté:<sup>12</sup> Anderlecht, Maison d'Érasme E 558]. Au sein de cet énorme massif récapitulatif de 1205 lettres, achevé d'imprimer en août 1529 (v. Allen VIII, Epp. 2203 et 2214), l'Ep. 2021 se trouve pp. 899–901, précédée de la mention '*Epistolae fragmentum*'.

<sup>10</sup> Voir Clutton, 'Simon Du Bois of Paris and Alençon', p. 124b.

<sup>11</sup> Merci à G. Hugo Tucker! Contrairement à ce que laisse entendre Halkin, *Erasmus ex Erasmo*, p. 148, il ne s'agit pas d'un *unicum*. A. Vanautgaerden m'en a signalé quatre autres ex.: à la BU de Göttingen, à la British Library à Londres, à la Bayerische à Munich, et à la BU d'Upsala.

<sup>12</sup> Merci à Alexandre Vanautgaerden!

La lettre envoyée de Gentilly par G. de Brie le 12 août 1528 figure donc en tête des éditions n° 1, 2, 3 et 4. Elle est en effet l'aiguillon, l'élément déclencheur de la longue et prudente lettre apologétique (Allen VII, Ep. 2046)<sup>13</sup> qu'Érasme adresse, par delà G. de Brie, à Budé lui-même et à ses admirateurs parisiens,<sup>14</sup> indisposés par le malencontreux parallèle entre le dieu des études humanistes et le laborieux imprimeur. Or dans quatre des éditions ici recensées (n° 1, 2, 4 et 5), cette invitation pressante, où son correspondant parisien prie, supplie Érasme de rassurer ses admirateurs français et de se justifier auprès de Budé, présente ce début pour le moins abrupt (v. Annexe 1):

GERMANVS BRIXIUS ERASMO ROTERODAMO S.D.

Venio ad epistolae tuae partem, quae ad te magnopere pertinens, mihi tecum quodammodo communis est: facere enim non possum pro necessitudinis nostrae iure, quin ipse statim existimationis istius tum commodi, tum incommodi particeps fiam. Equidem magnopere optarim, Erasme amicissime (sanctius uerbum usurpare hic non possum) nullam nubeculam, hoc praesertim tempore, alioqui studiis humanioribus satis infesto subortam fuisse, per quam amicitiae cum Budaeo tuae splendor obscurari posset. Est Budaeus, quod tu non nescis, nostris omnibus sic admirabilis ut eum tanquam pro numine aliquo studiosi omnes hic colant ([...]; voir la suite dans l'éd. Allen VII, Ep. 2021; pp. 435–38).

Néanmoins, contre toute attente,<sup>15</sup> au verso de la page de titre de la seconde édition parisienne, celle de 1529 (n°3) dont il ne subsiste qu'un seul et unique

<sup>13</sup> 'Itaque non parum de existimatione apud nostros tua bene meritum te opinor, si praestiteris ut vel loco ad Budaeum pertinente immutato, vel appendice ad opus attexta, vel epistola aliqua ad hunc vel illum scripta, eaque postea aedita, id Gallis nostris probatum fiat [...] te videlicet neque Budaei gloriae inuidere [...] neque [...]' (Allen VII, Ep. 2021. 105–13).

<sup>14</sup> Érasme adressera en effet début sept. 1528 avec sa dernière lettre à Budé (Allen VII, Ep. 2047) une copie manuscrite de sa longue lettre apologétique à de Brie (Allen VII, Ep. 2046), qu'il a aussi fait recopier pour Berquin (v. Allen VII, Ep. 2066. 15–16); et une fois les *Selectae aliquot epistolae* imprimées, il en fera déposer début octobre un exemplaire par son messenger Anton Bletz au domicile de Berquin, comme à celui de Budé et de G. de Brie: voir le témoignage de Philippe Montanus, alors arrivé à Paris (Allen VII, Ep. 2065. 61–63).

<sup>15</sup> Même l'*Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes*, éd. par Moreau, III: 1521–1530 (1985), qui recense les deux éditions successives de Wechel sous les n° 1391 et 1669, affirme un peu vite à propos de celle de 1529: 'suit l'éd. de 1528, n° 1391'. Les variantes du titre entre 1528 et 1529 (v. *supra* nn. 2 et 3 et Annexe 1 et 2) et le fait qu'en 1529 le verso de la page de titre n'est plus laissé vierge auraient dû alerter. En fait une comparaison attentive des deux éditions, possible grâce à la collation des deux ex. conservés à la Réserve de la BnF, montre que seul le premier cahier, le cahier A, a été recomposé en 1529; à partir du bas du verso du 5<sup>e</sup> feuillet, qui compte 28 lignes en 1529 contre 27 en 1528, la composition de 1529 suit ligne à ligne celle de

exemplaire, resté inconnu d'Allen, conservé au sein d'un recueil factice constitué à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> s. autour de la querelle du cicéronianisme (BnF, Rés. X 2445–2448), on découvre ceci (v. Annexe 2):

[A<sup>v</sup>] GERMANVS BRIXIVS ERASMO || *Roterodamo S.*

Tribus epistolis unica respondebo.<sup>16</sup> Amo te Erasme optime de ea opera, quam mihi diligenter nauas disquirendo librario aliquo qui desideratos mihi Chrysostomi libros Graecos exscribat.<sup>17</sup> Verum quando is diu per te quaesitus haud facile inueniri

1528 (à la réserve que 1529 corrige au f. 6, l. 19 la coquille \**omnibns*); le cahier *b* présente en 1528 et 1529, outre strictement la même composition, les mêmes coquilles. Il est possible que l'*unicum* de la BnF soit un mixte, constitué d'une première feuille recomposée en raison du rallongement de la lettre de G. de Brie, et d'une autre, restée du tirage de l'année précédente dans l'atelier de S. Du Bois. S'il est difficile d'inférer de ce constat dressé à partir d'un seul exemplaire que toute la nouvelle édition ait été ainsi constituée à partir de reliquats du tirage de 1528, il faut toutefois remarquer que, la marque de Wechel mise à part, les deux derniers ff. *b* [7] et *b* [8] étaient vierges dans l'édition de 1528: l'ajout du texte initial aurait donc normalement permis d'utiliser ces deux feuillets restés blancs dans l'ancienne imposition, ce qui n'a pas été le cas. Au contraire, le prote s'est ingénié, lors de la recomposition du cahier A, à densifier la composition des premières pages, accumulant abréviations et ligatures pour retrouver au plus vite la mise en page de 1528.

<sup>16</sup> Aucune de ces trois lettres d'Érasme à Brie n'a été retrouvée: Allen ne donne aucune lettre entre l'Ep. 1910 (envoyée à G. de Brie par Érasme à la fin de nov. 1527) et cette Ep. 2021, datée du 12 août 1528. Cette dernière permet néanmoins de reconstituer le contenu de ces trois lettres perdues puisque Brie semble y répondre dans l'ordre de réception. L'une de ces lettres, sans doute la plus ancienne, devait remercier G. de Brie de l'envoi de sa traduction de Chrysostome, parue en mars 1528 (v. *infra*, n. 22) et, partant, devait évoquer Écolampade (v. *infra*, n. 28): de Brie y répond dans le passage supprimé en 1528 qui suit; la deuxième avait manifestement pour sujet les réactions parisiennes au *Ciceronianus* (et là, il faut corriger les notes d'Allen du bas de la p. 435, aux l. 1 et 24: lorsque de Brie dit 'Venio ad epistolae tuae partem [...]', il ne renvoie pas à la lettre perdue d'Érasme à Berquin dont Érasme a joint copie à sa lettre (v. *infra*, p. 24), mais à cette deuxième lettre-là que lui a envoyée Érasme; enfin comme l'indique la l. 136 ('Quod ad edictum cuius postrema epistola tua [...] p. 438), la troisième lettre d'Érasme à de Brie concernait la ratification par l'Université de Paris de la condamnation des *Colloques* prononcée deux ans plus tôt par la Faculté de théologie.

<sup>17</sup> De Brie travaille en effet à la traduction latine de certains textes de Chrysostome depuis plusieurs années: v. La Garanderie, *Christianisme et lettres profanes*, pp. 155–60; et surtout le chapitre consacré à de Brie par Maillard, Magnien, Kecskemeti, et Portalier au sein de Maillard et coll., *La France des humanistes: Hellénistes 1*, pp. 11–40. Érasme l'a même associé à sa grande édition latine du Père grec, alors en cours: au sein des *Diui Ioannis Chrysostomi et Diui Athanasii lucubrationes aliquot*, pp. 212–304, il venait ainsi d'intégrer la traduction latine de G. de Brie — établie à partir du texte grec donné par Érasme lui-même en mai 1525 —, des six livres du *de Sacerdotio* publiée à Paris chez Josse Bade en 1526: v. Allen VI, Ep. 1733 et Allen VII, Ep. 1817; sur cette collaboration, qui se poursuivra jusqu'en 1536 et la sortie à Paris de la grande édition

istic potest, sequar consilium tuum. Aut enim ipse hinc ad uos aliquem mittam, aut ad Reginaldi Poli bibliothecam refugiam.<sup>18</sup> Quod postremum pridem fecissem, si Poli copiam nancisci hic potuissem. Est ille adhuc in Anglia,<sup>19</sup> nec spes est ulla fore, ut ad nos commigret.<sup>20</sup> Per Thomam Lupsetum uirum non minus candidum quam eruditum facile me ab illo impetraturum spero, quod ipsius bibliotheca habebit mihi usui futurum:<sup>21</sup> ad eam rem Lupsetus operam mihi quotidie suam, quae illius est humanitas, offert. Proinde tametsi per Babylae uersionem nostram existimo doctis iam aliquot probatam satis esse Oecolampadii istius uertendis Graecis, siue eam negligentiam, siue imperitiam appellare mauis:<sup>22</sup> tamen si qua et reliqua

Chevallon, v. aussi Allen IX, Ep. 2359 introduction.

<sup>18</sup> Ce sera chose faite en 1531: S. Grynaeus emprunte alors à R. Pole un ms. de Chrysostome à l'intention de G. de Brie (v. Allen IX, Ep. 2526). Le 10 mai 1527, G. de Brie avait déjà confié à Érasme son intention de profiter des richesses de la bibliothèque de Pole pour avancer ses travaux sur Chrysostome (Allen VII, Ep. 1817. 61–63).

<sup>19</sup> R. Pole avait en effet quitté l'Italie en juillet 1526 et regagné l'Angleterre au tout début de 1527: voir Allen VI, Epp. 1595 ou 1627; et Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> Dès oct. 1529 pourtant, R. Pole se trouvera à Paris en vue d'obtenir de la Faculté de théologie un avis favorable au divorce de Henri VIII: v. Mayer, 'A Mission Worse than Death'.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Lupset, qui avait déjà séjourné à Paris entre 1517 et 1519 et y avait fréquenté Budé (Allen III, Epp. 726 et 764), était attaché à la maison de R. Pole depuis mai 1525 (v. la notice de J. K. McConica in *CEBR*, II, pp. 357–59). En oct. 1526, sans doute, il était repassé par Paris et avait eu avec de Brie des échanges sur la médiocre qualité des traductions de Chrysostome par Oecolampade (Allen VII, Ep. 1817. l. 48–54); en 1528–29 il y séjourne de nouveau pour superviser les études de Thomas Winter, fils illégitime du cardinal Wolsey et fréquente de Brie, qui le prend d'ailleurs à témoin un peu plus bas dans la même lettre (Allen VII, Ep. 2021. 61–65).

<sup>22</sup> De Brie venait en effet de publier sa traduction-brûlot, *Diui Ioannis Chrysostomi liber contra gentiles*, éd. et trad. par de Brie, in 4° de 4–50–18ff. Dès la dédicace à François de Tournon, datée du 14 mars 1528, il stigmatisait la piètre qualité de la traduction d'Oecolampade, invitant l'archevêque à faire collationner cette version avec l'original grec par Denys Coron, alors attaché à sa maison. Sa propre traduction du texte grec était suivie d'un '*Insignium Ioannis Oecolampadii errorum in Chrysostomi Babyla admissorum elenchus*', couvrant pas moins de 16 feuillets, précédé d'une épître au lecteur où de Brie dénonçait non la négligence ou l'ignorance du traducteur mais sa '*malitia*'; et dans une postface (f. D[4]<sup>r-v</sup>), il en prenait encore à témoins ses amis P. Danès et J. Thousat: v. textes in Maillard et coll., *La France des humanistes: Hellénistes I*, pp. 20–24.

E. Staehelin a recensé et édité tous les passages où, entre 1527 et 1530, de Brie a dénigré le travail philologique d'Oecolampade: v. Oecolampadius, *Briefe und Akten*, éd. par Staehelin, I: 1499–1526 (1927), documents n.°491, 555–57, 583, 597, 702. Il est à noter que plusieurs correspondants d'Érasme partagent la sévérité de G. de Brie, comme Th. Lupset (Allen VII, Ep. 1817. 48–54), L. Ammonius (Allen VII, Ep. 2016. 91–97), C. Tunstall (Allen VIII, Ep. 2226. 70–75) ou P. Barbier (Allen VIII, Ep. 2239. 51–55). Pour un jugement plus distancié

item Chrysostomi opera Graeca ab illo uersa in manus meas uenire poterunt, equidem quantum in me erit, operam dabo, ut doctis, indoctis palam fiat, quam istic Oecolampadius in Graecis scientiam obtendit, non nisi meram esse imposturam: idque eo tantum proposito, ut ne Chrysostomus, autor uere aureus, ex ea dignitate, ac maiestate, quam apud suos Graecos iure optimo assecutus est, per illotas Oecolampadii manus ad Latinos translatus, in ordinem, ne quid acerbius dicam, tam indigne coactus esse uideatur. [Aij r°] Nolim enim quemque opinari id prouinciae capessere me uelle, quod priuatim Oecolampadio homini mihi nunquam uiso uel inuideam, uel infensus sim. Sed heus, quam tu mihi Oecolampadii tyrannidem istic narras? Iocone illud an serio mecum? 'Citius, inquis, ausim monere Caesarem'. Et item illud, 'cupiebam et librum Oecolampadio exhiberi, sed nemo putauit illum irritandum'. Si uera haec sunt, quis iam non dixerit apud uos Bellonam pro Minerua studiorum praesidem esse. Ita ne uero formidabilis ille uobis est, ut apud eum uel monitoris uel beneuoli hominis partes usurpare, illique quae ipsius maxime interest scire, renunciare nemo quisquam audeat. Si ita res se habet plane utrorumque me miseret καὶ τοῦ τυραννεύοντος καὶ τῶν τυραννευομένων. Illius quod sine amicis uiuat,<sup>23</sup> horum quod tanta cum seruitute tyrannum ferant. Sed fruatur ille pacificus per me tyrannide semel istic occupata, dum eam tamen non contingat ad nos usque prorogata, institutum nobis operaeprecium uel retardare, uel impedire. *Venio ad epistolae tuae partem, quae ad te magnopere pertinet, mihi tecum quodammodo communis est. Facere enim non possum pro necessitudinis nostrae iure, quin ipse statim existimationis istius tum commodi, tum incommodi particeps fiam [...]*

Comment débrouiller cette curieuse énigme bibliographique? Comment expliquer la disparition sur les presses de Froben de cette violente attaque contre le réformateur bâlois et sa réapparition à Paris, quelques mois plus tard, lors de la troisième impression de la lettre? Il est bien plus aisé de répondre à la première partie de la question — la formuler, c'est déjà presque la résoudre — qu'à la seconde.

Il faut assurément être plus qu'attentif aux deux lieux d'édition: grâce aux presses et aux relations commerciales de Froben, Bâle est pour lors le centre de diffusion de la pensée érasmienne dans l'Europe entière; Paris qui a un temps été un fervent foyer d'érasmisme, voit l'auteur du *Ciceronianus* d'un œil beaucoup moins favorable. Pour lors, c'est donc Paris qu'il faut reconquérir, et non Bâle qu'il faut indisposer. La ville suisse n'est d'ailleurs pas directement concernée par la publication des *Epistolae aliquot selectae*; raison de plus pour faire disparaître le début de la lettre de G. de Brie où le chef de la réforme bâloise est bien malmené.

sur Oecolampade traducteur, v. Staehelin, 'Die Väterübersetzungen Ökolampads'.

<sup>23</sup> Lieu commun antique, puis humaniste, auquel La Boétie donnera toute son ampleur à la fin de son *Discours*.

En outre, ce mince recueil épistolaire publié à la mi-septembre 1528 présente, on l'a vu, cinq lettres inédites, rédigées depuis moins d'un an, et qui, la lettre de Germain de Brie exceptée — et publiée en tête (f. A2<sup>r</sup>–B<sup>v</sup>: Allen VII, Ep. 2021) — sont toutes des lettres apologétiques d'Érasme.<sup>24</sup> Qu'il entende démontrer son orthodoxie auprès de détracteurs comme le franciscain Jean Gachi (f. D3<sup>v</sup>–E4<sup>r</sup>: Allen VI, Ep. 1891); qu'il défende ses *Colloques* contre les critiques de son ami John Longland (f. E4<sup>v</sup>–H4<sup>v</sup>: Allen VII, Ep. 2037); que pour son cher Maarten Lips il dresse le catalogue de toutes les accusations portées contre lui depuis plus de vingt ans à travers l'Europe entière (f. H4<sup>v</sup>–K4<sup>r</sup>: Allen VII, Ep. 2045); ou qu'il s'agisse enfin *via* Germain de Brie, de rassurer le grand Budé, dont il n'a jamais songé à entamer le prestige par ce parallèle avec Bade esquissé par le stupide personnage de Nosoponus — et non par l'auteur — dans le *Ciceronianus* (f. B<sup>v</sup>–D3<sup>v</sup>: Allen VII, Ep. 2046), à chaque fois dans des lettres d'une ampleur inhabituelle, qui confinent à l'apologie ou au court traité, Érasme combat et tente de désarmer ses adversaires: voilà donc, pour reprendre la juste conclusion de Léon-E. Halkin, 'un des plus petits et certes le plus incisif des recueils épistolaires d'Érasme'.<sup>25</sup>

La situation à Bâle à la fin de l'été 1528, rappelons-le, n'est pas des plus confortables pour Érasme: la tension monte entre les partisans d'Œcolampade et les Anabaptistes. Les affrontements se font de plus en plus violents, et le processus qui aboutira au départ d'Érasme en avril 1529 pour Fribourg est déjà engagé.<sup>26</sup> En pareille circonstance, on imagine aisément qu'Érasme n'ait pas souhaité envenimer davantage encore ses rapports avec le chef de file de la réforme bâloise en publiant,<sup>27</sup> en première page de ce nouveau recueil épistolaire censé apaiser

<sup>24</sup> Lire à ce sujet les analyses stimulantes de Bénévent, 'La Correspondance d'Érasme', II, 483–85; elle met en relation cette publication avec quatre autres brefs recueils des années 1522–28 où elle voit des 'œuvres de combat' dépourvues d'ambiguïté.

<sup>25</sup> Halkin, *Erasmus ex Erasmo*, p. 148 (qui présente le recueil pp. 145–48).

<sup>26</sup> Voir par ex. les ch. 21–22 de la biographie de Halkin, *Érasme parmi nous*, pp. 341–60.

<sup>27</sup> Œcolampade a tout d'abord été fort proche d'Érasme, qu'il a beaucoup aidé en 1515–16 pour ses *Annotations sur le Nouveau Testament* ou son éd. de Jérôme. Mais à partir de la publication du *de Libero Arbitrio*, leur évolution confessionnelle a vite éloigné les deux hommes; après 1525, Érasme entend ne plus donner de jugement public sur son ancien ami et collaborateur, se réservant de juger son action dans sa correspondance privée. Mais, toujours l'ambiguïté érasmiennne, certaines de ces lettres se voient publiées dans l'*Opus epistolarum* de 1529 (Allen VI, Epp. 1674 et 1697; Allen VII, Epp. 1835, 1977 ou 1979); Œcolampade fera d'ailleurs savoir son irritation (Allen IX, Epp. 2554 et 2559) devant certaines critiques à son encontre publiées dans les *Epistolae Floridae* de 1531: v. Bénévent, 'La Correspondance d'Érasme', II, 744–45. Sur les rapports complexes entre les deux hommes v. la notice de H. R. Guggisberg, *CEBR*, II, 24–27, et surtout l'étude non remplacée à ce jour d'Ernst Staehelin, 'Erasmus und Œcolampad in ihrem



ses ennemis, les critiques fort acerbes que G. de Brie continuait à lancer contre ses travaux sur saint Jean Chrysostome; et qu'il n'ait surtout pas souhaité voir imprimer ce début de lettre où il était explicitement cité en train de dénoncer la 'tyrannie' que faisait alors régner le réformateur à Bâle,<sup>28</sup> ou d'avouer qu'il n'avait pas même osé lui montrer la récente traduction du *Liber contra gentiles* publiée par G. de Brie.<sup>29</sup>

Dans sa thèse, Christine Bénévent a relevé et analysé de nombreuses modifications ponctuelles apportées par Érasme à ses lettres lorsqu'il les a fait passer du manuscrit à l'imprimé;<sup>30</sup> mais ici, même si on en comprend bien les motivations, il s'agit, faits plus gênants, d'une lettre écrite par un tiers, et d'une altération de conséquence. Il faut bien admettre qu'Érasme a pratiqué une forme de censure, par crainte que cette publication des *Selectae aliquot epistolae* — qui avait pour but d'expliquer son sentiment sur plusieurs sujets d'actualité, théologique ou littéraire — ne vienne ouvrir un nouveau front dans la ville même où résidait l'humaniste alors qu'il entendait pacifier les débats, se concilier des adversaires. Début octobre 1528, Érasme désapprouvera d'ailleurs la violence de G. de Brie à l'égard d'Écolampade, qu'il juge faire le lit de ses adversaires, les théologiens conservateurs:

Ringens um die Kirche Jesu Christ', in *Gedenkschrift zum 400 Todestage des Erasmus*, pp. 166–82.

<sup>28</sup> '[...] quam tu mihi Oecolampadii tyrannidem istic narras? Iocone illud an serio mecum? "Citius, inquis, ausim monere Caesarem". Aucune des trois lettres auxquelles répond ici de Brie n'a malheureusement été retrouvée, mais il est certain que dans l'une au moins Érasme dénonçait la terrible atmosphère qui régnait pour lors à Bâle.

<sup>29</sup> 'Et item illud, "cupiebam et librum Oecolampadio exhiberi, sed nemo putavit illum irritandum". On remarque que de Brie cite même ici Érasme à la première personne: la citation doit être très fidèle, et sa publication éventuelle d'autant plus embarrassante pour ce dernier [...] Notons qu'en outre cette frayeur générale semble bien injustifiée puisque la réaction d'Écolampade aux critiques acerbes lancées contre lui par G. de Brie (v. *supra*, n. 22) sera des plus modérées dans sa propre dédicace au margrave Philippe de Bade en tête des trois tomes de sa traduction latine des *Opera* de saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie (Bâle: A. Cratander, août 1528), f. b 2r° (v. passage transcrit: Oecolampadius, *Briefe und Akten*, éd. par Staehelin, n° 597, p. 215). Érasme le reconnaîtra d'ailleurs lui-même en tête d'une lettre à de Brie: 'Oecolampadius in praefatione Cyrilli fecit mei sine causa, tui non sine causa mentionem, sed moderatam'. (Allen VII, Ep. 2052. 1–2; Bâle, le 21 sept. 1528). Pour une explication de cette posture d'humilité face aux attaques de G. de Brie, v. Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Oekolampads*, pp. 456–66.

<sup>30</sup> Bénévent, 'La Correspondance d'Érasme', t. II, 502–19; par ex. p. 513, elle relève la suppression du nom d'Écolampade dans une lettre publiée en 1529 (Allen v, Ep. 1526, 231).

Germanus Brixius vertit Babylam plenisque velis inuectus est in Cœcolampadium, applaudentibus theologis. Accinctus est ad vertenda quae supersunt Psegmata.<sup>31</sup> Expecto novam hinc comœdiam. [Érasme à Levinus Ammonius, Bâle, le 2 oct. 1528; Allen VII, Ep. 2062. 22–25]

Et il dira à plusieurs reprises que le travail d'Œcolampade sur Chrysostome,<sup>32</sup> qu'il juge acceptable sinon parfait, ne mérite pas tant de sévérité:

Egi cum eruditis aliquot ut quædam verterent ab Œcolampadio versa. Brixius vertit Babylam, nunc etiam Monachum; sed reperio segnes omnes. Illud curatum est, ut partim Œcolampadius ipse, partim alii docti corrigant ab eo versa. Scholia illius, annotationes marginariae reiiciuntur, ne nomen quidem illius addetur. Ipsa sua cum Græcis, ut ait, contulit: quod idem a me factum est in meis. Quod attinet ad fidem bene reddendi Graeca, magis peccatum est ab Aniano, Aretino ac caeteris quam ab Œcolampadio; qui magis peccat festinatione quam imperitia. [Érasme à Cuthbert Tunstall, Fribourg, le 31 janv. 1530; Allen VIII, Ep. 2263. 42–51]

Tout semblait donc inciter Érasme à ce geste de censure pour le moins indélicat: la situation politico-religieuse à Bâle, ses propres rapports avec Œcolampade, comme son sentiment sur les travaux philologiques de son ancien collaborateur. Notons d'ailleurs que s'il supprime les critiques acerbes de G. de Brie en 1528 à son encontre, il publiera les deux jugements favorables que nous venons de citer dès 1529 et 1531, le premier au sein de l'*Opus epistolarum*, le second dans les *Epistolae floridae*.

En revanche, on cerne beaucoup moins bien les motivations de Chrétien Wechel, de son imprimeur, ou encore de son commanditaire, lorsqu'il décide de publier le fragment de lettre écarté quelques mois plus tôt à Bâle. Il faut tout d'abord noter qu'à Paris sur les presses de Simon Du Bois le contenu des *Selectae aliquot epistolae* fait l'objet, au début de l'année 1529, d'une double instrumentalisation; en effet outre ce rallongement de la lettre de G. de Brie dans la réédition des *Epistolae duae*, les trois autres lettres publiées à Bâle en septembre 1528, qui avaient été initialement écartées par l'éditeur parisien, vont être imprimées — fait qui a échappé jusqu'à présent à tous les spécialistes de la correspondance

<sup>31</sup> Poussières d'or: c'est ainsi qu'Œcolampade avait intitulé ses traductions de Chrysostome: *Diui Ioannis Chrysostomi Psegmata*, trad. par Œcolampadius, in 4° de 411ff. (exemplaire à Ste Geneviève).

<sup>32</sup> Outre les lettres citées ci-dessous, v. encore par ex. Allen VII, Ep. 1835. 11–12: 'Œcolampadius satis nouit Graece, Romani sermonis rudior. Quanquam ille magis peccat indiligentia quam imperitia'; ou Allen IX, Ep. 2359. 61–62: 'Quod superat, alius transtulit, non indoctus'.



d'Érasme, y compris à P. S. Allen — à la suite de la seconde édition parisienne de l'*Apologia Monasticae religionis* de Carvajal.<sup>33</sup>

Les cinq lettres publiées à Bâle en septembre 1528 continuent donc d'alimenter l'actualité parisienne en cette fin d'hiver. Il n'en demeure pas moins que cette dernière édition, issue de presses qui accordent habituellement moins de retentissement aux positions des moines, surtout lorsqu'ils sont franciscains comme Carvajal, présente un attelage qui laisse songeur. Par cette publication et par la divulgation du début de la lettre de G. de Brie, Simon Du Bois cherchait-il à faire réagir Érasme, à le faire sortir de ses retranchements? S'agissait-il au contraire, en publiant ainsi des preuves de sa duplicité à l'égard du grand réformateur bâlois, de le discréditer auprès des milieux luthéranisants parisiens?

Pour revenir à l'édition de 1529 des *Epistolae duae*, il serait assez tentant d'y voir une mesure de rétorsion de G. de Brie, qu'on peut supposer indisposé de l'indélicatesse dont il a été victime à Bâle:<sup>34</sup> par cette publication/révélation parisienne, il tiendrait à embarrasser Érasme, à lui montrer qu'on ne manipule pas impunément la correspondance d'autrui. Cette hypothèse paraît toutefois très peu probable. De Brie est en effet, il faut le répéter après M.-M. de la Garanderie,<sup>35</sup> un indéfectible érasmien, peut-être alors le seul inconditionnel d'Érasme en France. Et aucun indice dans sa correspondance — pas même le fait qu'Érasme n'intègrera pas dans sa grande édition de Chrysostome sa version de la *Comparatio regis et monachi* apparemment arrivée trop tard, et lui substituera celle [...] d'Æcolampade!<sup>36</sup> — n'indique qu'ait été entamée sa profonde et sincère

<sup>33</sup> Sur l'existence de deux éditions parisiennes successives de l'*Apologia* de Carvajal début 1529, v. *supra*, n. 8. Cette édition inconnue des trois lettres d'Érasme a été décrite en début d'article sous le n° 2 bis.

<sup>34</sup> On pourrait bien entendu avancer ici que les hommes de la Renaissance avaient un tout autre rapport que le nôtre aux textes issus de leur plume, et que les droits moraux attachés à la production intellectuelle n'existaient pas pour lors. Ce serait peut-être aller un peu vite en besogne: qu'on songe à la réaction outrée d'un A. Le Ferron lorsque Dolet instrumentalisa, et apparemment modifia les lettres privées que le juriste lui avait adressées, en les publiant à la suite de ses discours toulousains en 1534; v. Chassaigne, *Étienne Dolet*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>35</sup> Voir La Garanderie, 'Un érasmien français: G. de Brie'.

<sup>36</sup> 'Monachus tuus sero venit, altero iam dudum excuso' (Allen VIII, Ep. 2291. 3–4, du 27 mars 1530); fait réexpliqué dans Allen IX, Ep. 2379. 74–86; et encore confirmé par Allen IX, Ep. 2466. 154–64 (à N. Maillard, du 28 mars 1531): 'Eundem meo suasu vertit Germanus Brixius, sed quoniam ille Callipidem egit, seroque misit quod verterat, quum totus exiret Chrysostomus, Æcolampadianam æditionem recepimus.' Sur l'intégration par Érasme des traductions d'Æcolampade dans sa grande édition de Chrysostome en 1530, v. Staehelin, *Das theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Ækolampads*, pp. 620–21.

admiration pour Érasme, qu'il manifesterait encore avec éclat au moment de sa mort en participant à l'un de ses tombeaux.<sup>37</sup>

On le sent bien à lire sa correspondance, de toute évidence, de Brie rêve en 1528/1529 de jouer le rôle flatteur de réconciliateur entre les deux phares de l'Humanisme, à l'instar du rôle de pacificateur qu'avait efficacement joué Érasme entre 1519 et 1521 lors de la dispute entre de Brie lui-même et Thomas More autour de l'incendie de la Cordelière et de la célébration d'Hervé de Portzmoguer.<sup>38</sup> Et, fort lié à Janus Lascaris ou à Jacques Thousat, il fait jouer tout son entourage pour faire cesser la campagne d'épigrammes anti-érasmiennes lancée durant l'été 1528 à Paris.<sup>39</sup>

Pour expliquer cette résurgence, il faut tourner notre regard ailleurs, et songer que le milieu humaniste parisien est mis en ébullition par l'affaire du *Ciceronianus*: de mains en mains les épigrammes circulent manuscrites, mais les lettres aussi. Érasme avait ainsi communiqué à de Brie la copie d'une première lettre de justification, apparemment assez peu amène à l'égard de Budé, aujourd'hui perdue, que sous le sceau du secret il avait adressée à Berquin, sans doute en juillet 1528. Or à trois reprises au moins Érasme s'indignera de l'avoir vu circuler à Paris 'comme si elle était imprimée'.<sup>40</sup> G. de Brie, cela est plus que probable, aura communiqué à Berquin une minute de sa propre lettre du 12 août à l'adresse d'Érasme (Allen, 2021), d'autant qu'elle est en un sens, au delà d'une réaction à la lecture du *Ciceronianus*, une réponse à cette lettre perdue adressée à Berquin par Érasme, à laquelle de Brie fait même allusion.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Voir ses trois épitaphes à la gloire du grand disparu et sa lettre du 29 sept. 1536 à G. Du Bellay, épître qui les présente, in Erasmus, *Catalogi duo operum*, pp. 87–92.

<sup>38</sup> Voir Lavoie, 'La fin de la querelle entre G. de Brie et Th. More'. De Brie avait chanté le haut fait naval du capitaine breton (août 1512) dans un poème épique dédié à Anne de Bretagne; Th. More le dénigra dans ses épigrammes publiées en 1518, ce qui provoqua une querelle patriotico-littéraire: v. le texte de la *Chordigene nauis conflagratio*, in *Humbert de Montmoret, Germain de Brie, Pierre Choque*, éd. par Provini, pp. 99–119. Tout le dossier de la querelle entre More et de Brie a été rassemblé et amplement commenté: voir *CW*, III, 2: *Latin Poems*, éd. par Clarence Miller (1984), pp. 448–65 et 482–513.

<sup>39</sup> Sur la circulation de ces épigrammes qui indisposent fort Érasme, voir par ex. Allen VII, Epp. 2027. 24–33; 2038, 9–28; 2077, 10–15; Allen VIII, Epp. 2105. 10–17; 2119, 1–10; 2291, 27–31.

<sup>40</sup> '[...] sic per omnium manus volitet ut ædita videri possit' (Allen VII, Ep. 2077. 9–10; du 23 déc. 1528, à Berquin); v. aussi Allen VII, Epp. 2048. 9–15 (toujours à Berquin), et 2047, 24–29 (à Budé lui-même). Cet incident a été analysé de près par Bénévent, 'La Correspondance d'Érasme', II, 456–58.

<sup>41</sup> 'Mihi porro epistolae πρὸς τὸν δεῖνα [= Berquin] tuæ exemplo opus non erat, ut ad causae

On peut donc fort bien imaginer qu'un des humanistes parisiens, encore indisposé, tout comme Budé lui-même, contre Érasme en 1529, se trouvant détenteur d'une copie intégrale de cette lettre de G. de Brie, ait voulu jouer ce mauvais tour à 'l'ennemi du nom français'.<sup>42</sup> On pourrait ainsi songer à Thousat ou à Lascaris, et pourquoi pas à Berquin lui-même: son luthéranisme le rapproche fort de Simon Du Bois,<sup>43</sup> de l'atelier duquel sont issues en 1528 et 1529 les deux éditions successives des *Epistolae duae*; les deux hommes se connaissent puisque S. Du Bois a imprimé plusieurs des œuvres de Berquin.<sup>44</sup> À en croire Érasme, ce dernier ne semble par ailleurs pas très scrupuleux avec la correspondance de ses amis.<sup>45</sup> N'oublions pas en outre qu'Érasme lui avait fait remettre un exemplaire des *Selectae aliquot epistolae*;<sup>46</sup> s'il était bien détenteur d'une minute de la lettre de Brie à Érasme, comme nous le supposons, il lui était aisé de s'apercevoir de la coupe, d'autant que la lettre censurée de G. de Brie ouvrait le recueil imprimé à Bâle.

\* \* \*

Voilà, il est vrai, de pures spéculations, et fort fragiles; mais quels qu'en soient le responsable et le commanditaire, cette publication intégrale de la lettre de

tuae patrociniū instructor fierem. Nolim tamen multis de causis non lectam mihi epistolam'. (Allen VII, Ep. 2021. 24–26).

<sup>42</sup> C'est ainsi qu'est pour lors présenté Érasme à Paris.

<sup>43</sup> Sur les publications luthériennes, de 'cet imprimeur, le plus important de la Réforme française naissante', aux dires de Francis Higman, v. la riche étude de Tricard, 'La Propagande évangélique en France'; et Higman, *Lire et découvrir, passim* (v. index, p. 704; et p. 63 pour la citation). Pour l'ensemble de sa production (plus de cinquante impressions ou éditions entre 1525 et 1533), v. Clutton, 'Simon Du Bois of Paris and Alençon', pp. 126–30.

<sup>44</sup> Ainsi *Le Symbole des apostres (qu'on dict vulgairement le Credo)* [...], s.l.n.d., in 8°, 14ff. (Paris: Du Bois, c. 1525: v. *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes*, éd. par Moreau, III, n. 819), la *Brefve admonition de la maniere de prier*, s.l.n.d., in 8°, 8ff. (Paris: Du Bois, c. 1525: v. *Brefve admonition de la maniere de prier*, éd. par Telle), ou la *Declamation des louenges de mariage*, s.l.n.d., in 8° (Paris: Du Bois, c. 1525: v. *Declamation des louenges de mariage (1525)*, éd. par Telle). L'adaptation française du *Betbüchlein* de Luther (Luther, *Le Livre de vraye et parfaicte oraison*, trad. par Farel) a également un temps été attribuée à Berquin, mais Higman, *Lire et découvrir*, pp. 179–85, a établi qu'elle était l'œuvre de Farel. Sur les rapports 'fréquents' entre Du Bois et Berquin, v. *Declamation des louenges de mariage (1525)*, éd. par Telle, intr., pp. 106–08.

<sup>45</sup> Érasme accusera ainsi Berquin auprès de G. de Brie de ne pas avoir communiqué 'à son habitude' ('quod ille solet interdum': Allen VIII, Ep. 2291. 25–26) sa lettre à Jacques Thousat du 13 mars 1529 (Allen VIII, Ep. 2119) où il lui reprochait d'avoir lancé des épigrammes contre le *Ciceronianus*.

<sup>46</sup> Voir *supra*, n. 14.

G. de Brie entendait indisposer, embarrasser Érasme, voire le mettre en délicatesse avec Œcolampade. Il s'agit bien d'un geste malveillant, sinon hostile, chargé de lui rappeler ses devoirs à l'égard des humanistes français: après avoir froissé le grand Budé, il se permettait de censurer l'un de ses lieutenants.

Comme d'autres publications à venir,<sup>47</sup> cette mince plaquette de 1529 marque, à la différence d'autres recueils épistolaires parisiens étudiés par M.-M. de la Garanderie,<sup>48</sup> que l'idylle entre le Prince de l'Humanisme et les milieux réformistes de la capitale est bel et bien terminée, préfigurant par là le déclin de l'influence d'Érasme en France dans la suite du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> On peut bien sûr songer à la publication à Paris en 1531 des *Tres et viginti libri* d'Alberto Pio par J. Bade, naguère encore fidèle coryphée du message érasmien, ou à celle de l'*Oratio* de Scaliger chez Vidoue, autre diffuseur de l'érasmeisme: v. ce que j'ai pu avancer sur l'évolution de ce dernier, in Scaliger, *Oratio pro. M. Tullio Cicerone*, éd. par Magnien, pp. 81–82.

<sup>48</sup> La Garanderie, 'Recueils parisiens de lettres d'Érasme'.

<sup>49</sup> Voir à ce sujet l'étude très convaincante de Phillips, 'Erasmus in France in the Later XVI<sup>th</sup> Century'; un écho inversé de son maître ouvrage: Phillips, *Érasme et les débuts de la réforme française*.

## Annexe 1

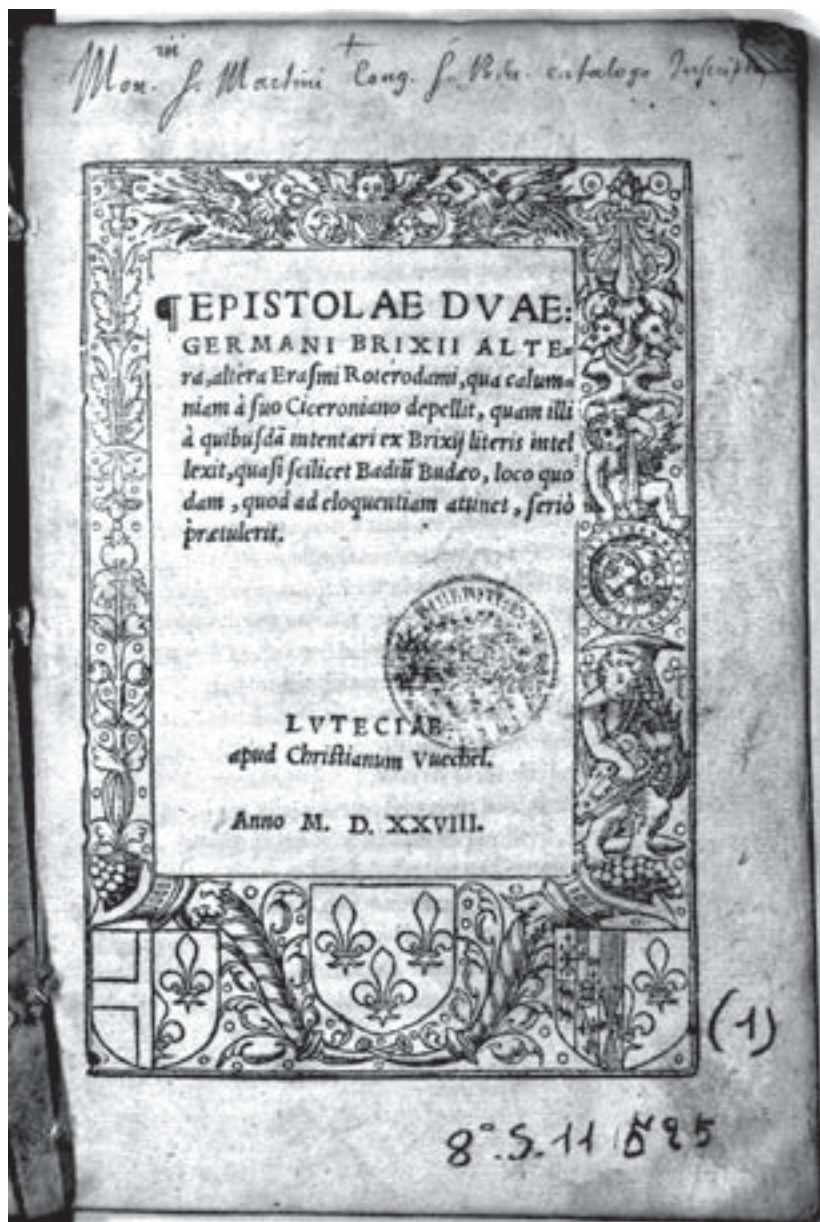


Figure 1a: Page de titre de l'éd. de 1528 (n° 2.) — Ars. 8° S. 11525 (1);  
dimension originale: 16,1 x 10,5 cm.



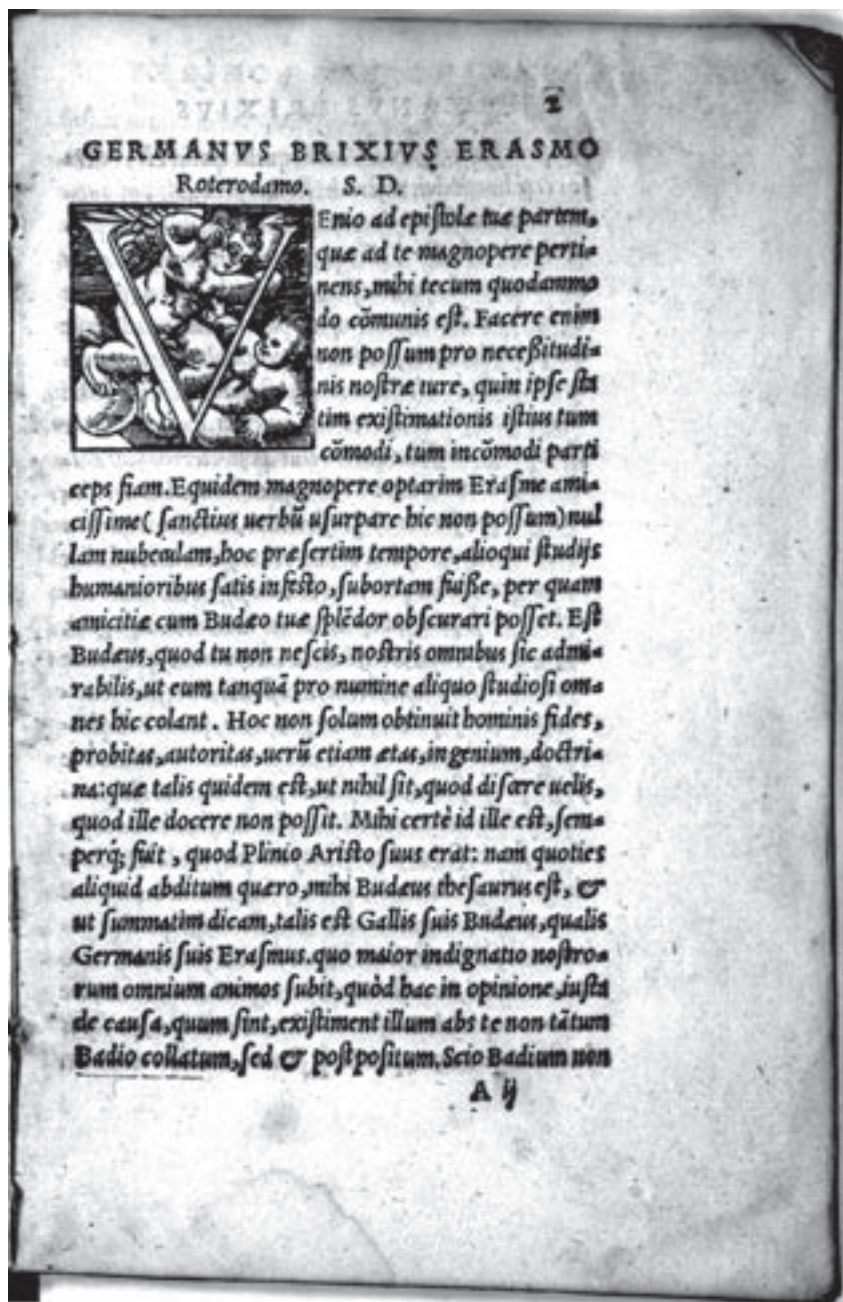


Figure 1b. f. Aij de l'éd. de 1528 (n° 2.) — Ars. 8° S. 11525 (1);  
dimension originale: 16,1 x 10,5 cm.

## Annexe 2

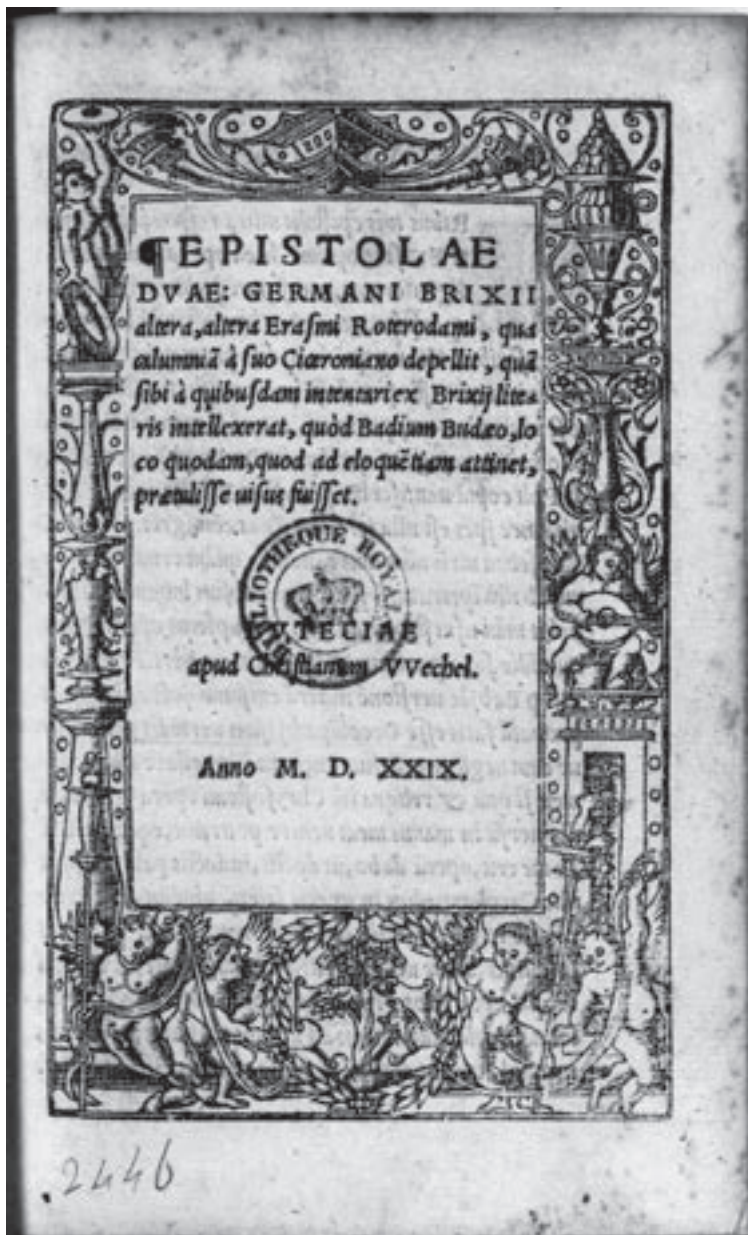


Figure 2a. Page de titre de l'éd. de 1529 (n° 3.) — BnF, Rés. X 2446; dimension originale: 15,5 x 10 cm.

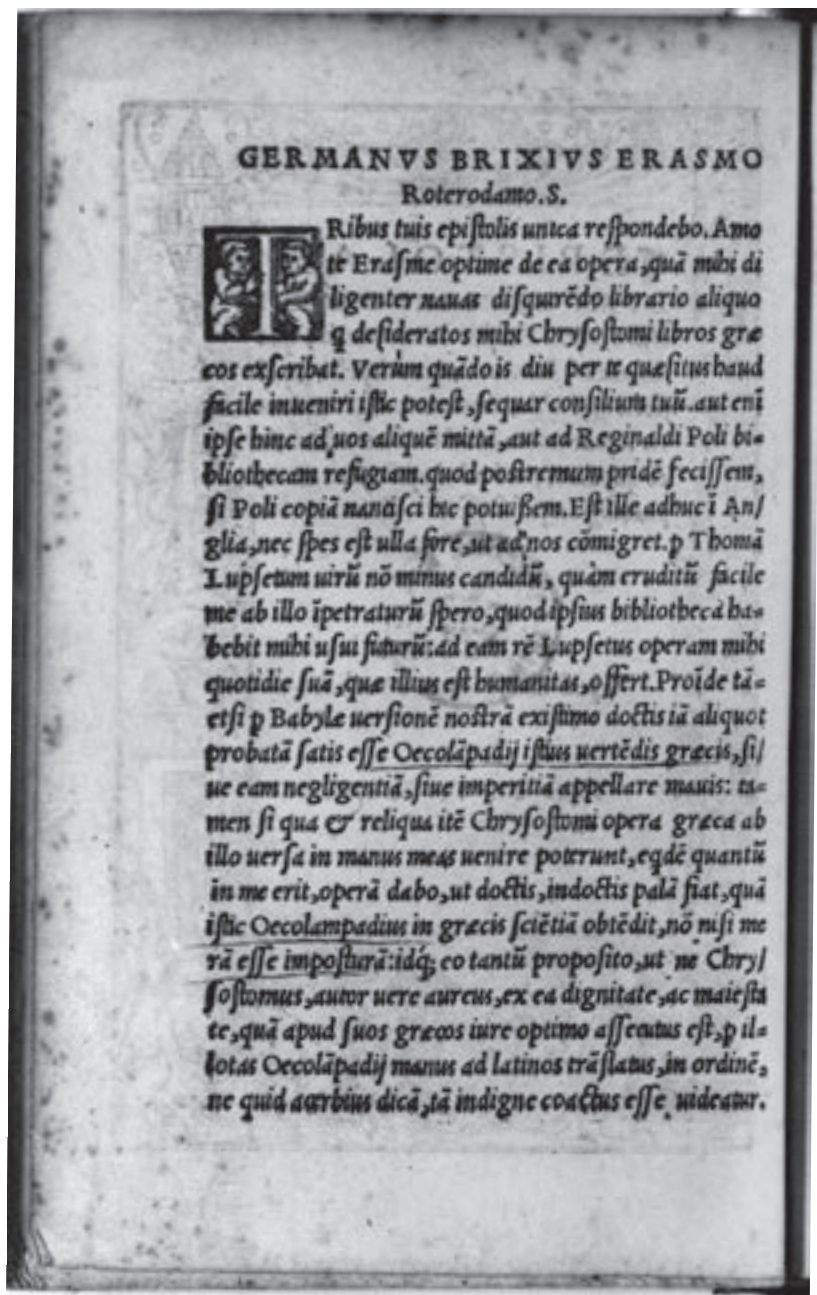


Figure 2b. f. A<sup>v</sup> de l'éd. de 1529 (n° 3.) — BnF, Rés. X 2446;  
dimension originale: 15,5 x 10 cm.



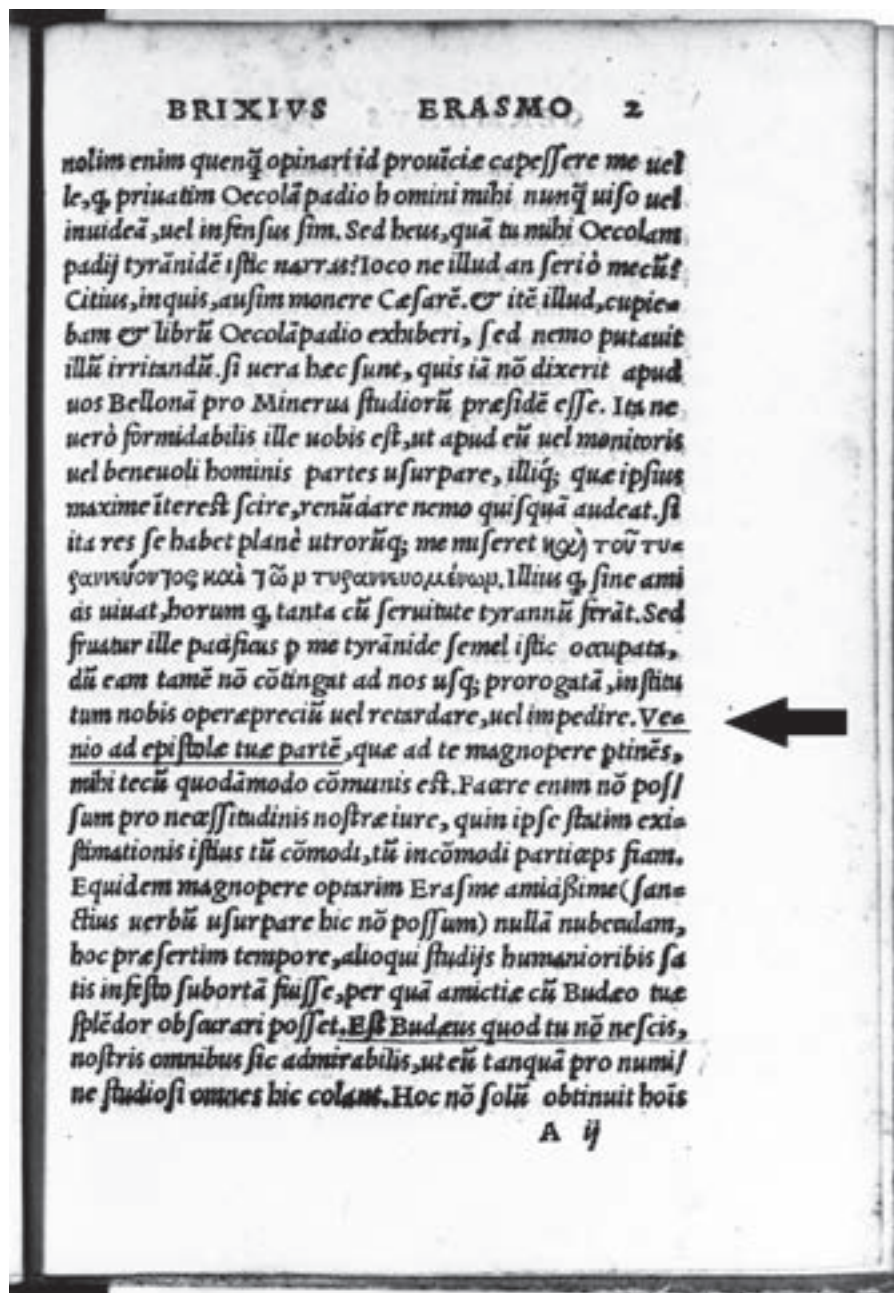


Figure 2c. f. Aj<sup>r</sup> de l'éd. de 1529 (n° 3.) — BnF, Rés. X 2446;  
dimension originale: 15,5 x 10 cm.

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## SUPPLEMENTA ALLENIANA: TENTATIVE DE BILAN ET PERSPECTIVES\*

Christine Bénévent

La découverte par Michel Magnien d'un nouveau *Supplementunculum Allenianum* prouve qu'il est encore possible aujourd'hui, quelque cent ans après la publication du premier volume de la correspondance érasmiennne par Percy Stafford Allen, de découvrir, çà et là, des textes ou des fragments de texte qui ont échappé à sa sagacité.

Au cours des cinquante années qui ont suivi la publication du douzième et dernier volume de cette correspondance, quelques chercheurs ont connu l'ivresse de la trouvaille, la joie de mettre au jour une trace occultée jusqu'alors. Mais aucune de ces découvertes n'a été 'officiellement' intégrée à une nouvelle édition, révisée, de l'édition Allen, qui semble devoir demeurer, et pour longtemps encore, l'édition de référence.<sup>1</sup>

C'est dans cette mesure qu'il m'a paru utile de dresser un bilan des précisions apportées par les découvertes récentes en matière de critique érasmiennne. Il s'est agi non seulement de recenser les lettres découvertes après l'édition Allen, mais aussi d'esquisser une liste des modifications qu'a entraînées l'utilisation de nouvelles sources.<sup>2</sup> Il se peut, bien sûr, que certaines d'entre elles m'aient échappé, mais j'espère ainsi fournir un premier outil de travail utile — quoique d'une lecture fastidieuse — à tous ceux qui travaillent sur l'humaniste hollandais.

\* Je tiens à remercier, pour leur aide précieuse et / ou leur patience, Michel Magnien, Jeanine De Landtsheer, Alexandre Vanautgaerden et Stephen Ryle.

<sup>1</sup> L'édition des *Opera Omnia* d'Érasme (*ASD*), actuellement en cours à Amsterdam, n'a pas prévu de reprendre l'*Opus Epistolarum*, qui aurait correspondu à la série III.

<sup>2</sup> Le recensement ici présenté est issu de travaux préparatoires à une thèse non encore publiée: Bénévent, 'La Correspondance d'Érasme', à paraître aux éditions Droz.

Précisons quelques chiffres pour commencer. Dans sa physionomie actuelle, et d'après mes décomptes,<sup>3</sup> ce corpus comprend au moins trois mille cent quatre-vingt-dix lettres, qui se répartissent de la façon suivante:

- les trois mille cent quarante et une lettres numérotées de 1 à 3141 dans l'édition Allen;
- les vingt-trois lettres supplémentaires découvertes au cours de la publication de l'*Opus Epistolarum* et intégrées par Allen lui-même en numérotation bis (signalée par un A),<sup>4</sup> auxquelles s'ajoutent quatre lettres qu'Allen a placées en tête de son édition sans les numéroter et que, suivant l'édition anglaise, l'on peut remettre à leur place chronologique et numéroter en conséquence;<sup>5</sup>
- les deux testaments d'Érasme, publiés en annexe par Allen et numérotés Ep. 1779A et Ep. 3095A dans la traduction française;
- quelques lettres non retenues par Allen, mais intégrées par les traducteurs français et / ou anglais, ainsi que la vingtaine de lettres qui avaient échappé à Allen et ont été retrouvées depuis.

Sans doute convient-il d'expliciter quelque peu les éléments dont j'ai disposé pour ce décompte.

<sup>3</sup> Ces décomptes, établis à partir de données fournies par P.S. Allen, données ensuite complétées, figurent dans une base de données annexée à ma thèse, que j'espère pouvoir mettre prochainement en ligne.

<sup>4</sup> Ce système peut être source de confusion dans la mesure où d'autres lettres, publiées par Allen sous un numéro compris entre 1 et 3141, ont ensuite été déplacées et ont fait l'objet d'une nouvelle numérotation, également signalée par la présence de la lettre A: sur ce point, voir *infra*. Les lettres supplémentaires sont les suivantes: Allen I, Ep. 27A à Cornelis Gerard; Allen III, Ep. 187A de Jules II; Allen III, Ep. 240A de William Warham; Allen I, Ep. 244A de Jerome de Busleyden; Allen II, Ep. 326A de Willibald Pirckheimer; Allen VI, Ep. 680A de Symphorien Champier; Allen VIII, Ep. 1127A à Martin Luther; Allen V, Ep. 1141A à Johannes Theodorici Harius; Allen VIII, Ep. 1192A à Georg Spalatin; Allen VI, Ep. 1432A à Conradus Mutianus Rufus; Allen V, Ep. 1443A de Jean Matthieu Giberti; Allen VI, Ep. 1589A de Gian Matteo Giberti à Theodoricus Hezius; Allen VI, Ep. 1650A de Gian Matteo Giberti; Allen VIII, Ep. 1739A de Matthias Pistor; Allen VI, Ep. 1784A de Mercurino Gattinara à l'Université de Louvain; Allen VI, Ep. 1790A de Mercurino Gattinara; Allen VII, Ep. 1806A à Nicolas Varius; Allen VIII, Ep. 1837A de François Titelmans; Allen VIII, Ep. 1994A de Konrad Goclenius; Allen XI, Ep. 2253A à Alonso de Fonseca; Allen XI, Ep. 2401A de Léonard de Gruyères; Allen X, Ep. 2766A de Bonifacius Amerbach; Allen XI, Ep. 3031A de Conrad Heresbach.

<sup>5</sup> La lettre à Johann Von Botzheim du 30 janvier 1523 est ainsi devenue l'Ep. 1341A; le *Compendium Vitae*, envoyé avec la lettre à Conrad Goclenius, deviendrait l'Ep. 1437A (sous réserves); la lettre de Beatus Rhenanus à Hermann von Wied deviendrait l'Ep. 3137A et celle à Charles Quint l'Ep. 3142.

### *Les lettres déplacées dans les traductions française et anglaise*

En ce qui concerne les trois mille cent soixante-dix lettres publiées par Allen lui-même, une vingtaine d'entre elles ont été déplacées dans les traductions française et / ou anglaise, grâce à des informations nouvelles qui ont permis d'en préciser la date:<sup>6</sup>

- Allen I, Ep. 264 à Johannes Sapidus: désormais datée de février 1517, et non plus 1516 (devenue Ep. 391A);
- Allen II, Ep. 420 de Bruno Amerbach: désormais datée de juin 1515 (devenue Ep. 337A);
- Allen III, Ep. 660 à Gérard Listre: datée du 11 septembre 1519, et non plus 1517, par Allen lui-même (devenue Ep. 1013A);
- Allen III, Ep. 692 de Karel Ofhuys: datée du 30 octobre 1516, et non 1517 (devenue Ep. 480A);
- Allen III, Ep. 705 à Bruno Amerbach: datée du 4 novembre 1518, et non 1517 (devenue Ep. 902A);
- Allen III, Ep. 733 à Wolfgang Lachner: datée de novembre, et non décembre 1517 (devenue Ep. 704A);
- Allen IV, Ep. 1035 de Martin Lipse et 1036 à Martin Lipse: datées de juillet, et non octobre 1519 (devenues Ep. 1000A et 1000B);
- Allen IV, Ep. 1201 de Bonifacius Amerbach: datée de septembre, et non mai 1521 (devenue Ep. 1233A);
- Allen V, Ep. 1412 à Silvestro Mazolini: datée de janvier 1523 et non 1524 (devenue Ep. 1337A);
- Allen V, Ep. 1436 à Gerhard Geldenhauer: désormais datée de juin 1525 (devenue Ep. 1581A);
- pour Allen V, Ep. 1438 de Clément VII, la lettre réellement envoyée est datée du 30 avril 1523 (devenue Ep. 1443B);
- Allen V, Ep. 1459 à Kaspar Hedio: datée de fin août, et non fin juin 1524 (devenue Ep. 1477B);

<sup>6</sup> Je me permets de renvoyer aux introductions et notes de ces traductions pour le détail des explications concernant ces déplacements: Erasmus, *Correspondance*, dir. Gerlo (voir Theunissen-Faider, *D'une correspondance, l'autre*); *CWE*, suivi du numéro de volume. Dans *CWE*, la correspondance occupera les volumes 1 à 22; dernier volume publié en 2012: vol. 15. Lorsque les traductions française et anglaise étaient en désaccord, j'ai généralement retenu la solution anglaise (plus récente et mieux étayée) mais, quand la date restait trop incertaine, j'ai seulement indiqué la proposition de *CWE* dans la rubrique 'Lettres en suspens' (voir *infra*).



- Allen v, Ep. 1508 au Conseil Municipal de Bâle: datée de fin août, et non octobre 1524 (devenue 1477A);
- Allen vi, Ep. 1644 à Conrad Pellikan: datée de mars 1527, et non 1525 (devenue Ep. 1792A).

À quoi s'ajoutent les lettres suivantes, échangées avec Boniface Amerbach, et redatées de façon convaincante dans *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, éd. par Hartmann: Allen x, Ep. 2764 (devenue Ep. 2766A); Allen x, Ep. 2902 (devenue Ep. 2989A); Allen x, Ep. 2903 (devenue Ep. 2992A); Allen x, Ep. 2907 (devenue Ep. 2995A); Allen x, Ep. 2908 (devenue Ep. 2997A); Allen x, Ep. 2931 (devenue Ep. 2966A); Allen xi, Ep. 2991 (devenue Ep. 2997B).

### *Lettres en suspens et / ou textes 'améliorés'*

La découverte d'autres sources a pu permettre, à l'instar du travail réalisé par Michel Magnien sur la lettre de Germain de Brie, d'améliorer certains textes, et soit de préciser leur date sans pour autant nécessiter leur déplacement,<sup>7</sup> soit de proposer des dates encore incertaines:

- Allen i, Ep. 117 me semble à juste titre datée par J. Chomarat de 1509,<sup>8</sup> et non plus 1499: elle deviendrait alors l'Ep. 216A.
- Allen iii, Ep. 912 à Martin Lipse a été datée sans certitude de novembre 1518 par les auteurs de la traduction anglaise (*CWE* 6, 189), qui l'estiment de toute façon antérieure à 1519 (elle deviendrait alors l'Ep. 898A). De même pour l'Ep. 2680 de Girolamo Aleandro, datée sans certitude d'octobre 1521 (elle deviendrait l'Ep. 1241A). Signalons par ailleurs que les dates des Ep. 1130, 1140, 1170 sont également supposées fausses dans la traduction anglaise.

<sup>7</sup> En ce qui concerne la leçon des textes, on pourra consulter les références suivantes. Pour Allen vi, Ep. 1695 à Jan de Hondt: Claeys Bouuaert, 'Une lettre inédite d'Érasme (1525)'; Halkin, 'Une lettre d'Érasme perdue et deux fois retrouvée'; pour Allen x, Ep. 2799 à Karel Utenhove: Marc'Hadour, 'Érasme, un portrait peu connu, une lettre autographe' (copie utilisée par Allen défectueuse); l'autographe de Allen iv, Ep. 1193 a été retrouvé en 1997 — voir *Morus ad Craneveldium literae Balduinianaenouae*, éd. par Herbrüggen — et cette édition a donné lieu à une intéressante étude de Verweij, 'Remarks on Some So-Called Erasmusian Correspondence'. Par ailleurs, Höss, 'Der Brief des Erasmus am Kurfürst Friedrich den Wiesen', a montré que le texte allemand publié en note dans Allen iii, Ep. 939 était en fait une traduction, par Spalatin, de Allen iii, Ep. 979.

<sup>8</sup> Chomarat, ii, 1006, n. 16.



- Allen III, Ep. 985 à Justus Jonas est devenue 967A dans la traduction anglaise (*CWE* 6, 373). D'après le commentaire du destinataire, la lettre réellement envoyée était deux fois plus courte. Elle aurait été amplifiée en signe d'amitié, et elle a sans doute été redatée à cette occasion.
- Allen v, Ep. 1280 à Martin Davidt, datée par Allen de 1522, serait à placer plutôt dans les années 1530: P. Lefebvre<sup>9</sup> proposait 1531, les éditeurs des *CWE* ont choisi 1528, où elle est devenue l'Ep. 1997A (*CWE* 14, 195).
- Suivant l'interprétation de Delaruelle, Marie-Madeleine de la Garanderie suggérerait de dater Allen v, Ep. 1370,<sup>10</sup> de Guillaume Budé, du début de l'année 1523, et non de juin. Non sans hésitation, les traducteurs anglais ont maintenu juin.
- La démonstration d'E. Rummel permet de déplacer Allen v, Ep. 1436, en juin 1525, comme nous l'avons vu.<sup>11</sup> E. Rummel avance en outre des arguments convaincants pour faire de ce texte une partie, finalement abandonnée, de l'Ep. 1581 à Noël Béda.

Les débats ont été nombreux à porter sur les quarante-huit premières lettres, qui ne comportaient aucune date. H. de Vocht a par exemple proposé de corriger les dates d'Allen pour les Ep. 1 à 17,<sup>12</sup> mais la reconstitution qu'il propose a été contestée par J. D. Tracy, puis par R. L. DeMolen.<sup>13</sup> Grâce à ce dernier, l'Ep. 1 est désormais datée de 1486, et non plus de 1484. Les Ep. 36 et 37 dateraient de 1489, et non de 1494.<sup>14</sup> Mais l'on en reste, pour une large part, aux conjectures.

### *Les lettres découvertes depuis l'édition Allen*

Je me suis surtout intéressée aux lettres publiées à la suite de l'édition Allen, qui forment désormais un ensemble conséquent, et dont les textes originaux, essentiellement latins, mériteraient une publication commune qui en rendrait l'accès plus facile. À ma connaissance, aucun bilan systématique n'avait été dressé depuis 1970.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Lefevre, 'Martin Davidt, un ami d'Érasme à Bruxelles'.

<sup>10</sup> *La Correspondance d'Érasme et de Guillaume Budé*, éd. par de la Garanderie, p. 238, n. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Voir *supra*. Rummel, "Nihil actum est sine autoritate maiorum".

<sup>12</sup> De Vocht, 'Erasmiana'.

<sup>13</sup> Tracy, 'On the Composition Dates of Seven of Erasmus' Writings'; DeMolen, 'Erasmus as Adolescent'.

<sup>14</sup> De Caprariis, 'Per la datazione dei due lettere di Erasmo'.

<sup>15</sup> Je ne disposais pas, lorsque j'ai fini ma thèse, du bilan dressé par Heesakkers, 'Erasmus

Afin d'en faciliter le repérage, je les ai classées selon le rang auquel elles apparaissent en traduction, ou bien auquel elles apparaîtraient dans l'édition Allen, bien que ce rang soit parfois sujet à caution (il apparaît alors entre < >). J'ai systématiquement indiqué la référence où peut être consulté le texte latin :

- Ep. <65A> de Rutgerus Sicamber, s.l., automne 1497 (Kristeller, 1955) et Ep. 216A de Daniele Scevola, Ferrare, 22 décembre 1509 (Kristeller, 1958): Kristeller, 'Two Unpublished Letters to Erasmus'
- Ep. <326B> à Jakob Wimpfeling, <Francfort, mars-avril 1515>: Kristeller, 'A Little-Known Letter of Erasmus'
- Ep. 732A à Bruno Amerbach, Louvain, 6 décembre 1517, publiée dans *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, éd. par Hartmann, IV (1953), n° 595A, p. 1
- Ep. 856A à Johannes Sapidus, Bâle, 12 août 1518: Bruehl, 'Zwei unbekannte Briefe von Erasmus'
- Ep. 863A à Ulrich von Hutten, Bâle, 8 septembre 1518: Kristeller, 'Una lettera inedita di Erasmo a Hutten conservata a Firenze'
- Ep. <1232A> d'Arsenius Apostolios, Florence, 31 août 1521: Koster, 'Een brief van den humanist Arsenius aan Erasmus'. Numérotée 1226A dans la traduction française, cette lettre y est datée du 16 août 1521. Les traducteurs anglais ont retenu le 31 août en raison du système de datation utilisé par Apostolios (*CWE* 8, 441, n. 3)
- Ep. <1270A> de Giovanni Battista Casalius, Rome, printemps 1522: Seidel Menchi, 'Alcuni atteggiamenti della cultura italiana di fronte a Erasmo'
- Ep. <1429A> à Kaspar Hedio, mars 1524: Augustijn, 'Érasme et Strasbourg 1524'
- Ep. <1443B> à Bonifacius Amerbach ou Ludwig Ber, Bâle, mai 1524 (copie partielle, numérotée de façon incompréhensible Ep. 956A dans l'édition française, vol. XII, p. 7): *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, éd. par Hartmann, IX (1983), p. xcvi
- Ep. <1634A> de Benedetto Giovio, Bâle, 1525: Linamenti, 'La lettere di Benedetto Giovio ad Erasmo'; et Miller, 'A New Manuscript of Benedetto Giovio's Letter to Erasmus'

epistolographus', pp. 29–30, n. 2. Cette première liste, fort utile, n'est cependant pas l'objet principal du propos de C. Heesakkers, et peut être complétée. Voir, pour des bilans partiels antérieurs: Thomson, 'Erasmii Epistolae: New Letters and Some New Texts', pour les textes retrouvés avant 1970; Halkin, 'Percy Stafford Allen', notamment pp. 20–23, qui signale certains des textes retrouvés avant 1983.

- Ep. 2178A de Willibald Pirckheimer, Nuremberg, 14 juin 1529: *Willibald Pirckheimers Briefwechsel*, éd. par Scheible, Ep. 1229 (*CWE* 15, 294).
- Ep. 2233A à Bonifacius Amerbach, Bâle, 6 novembre 1529: Margolin, 'Du nouveau sur Érasme'
- Ep. 2259A à Cornelius Crocus, Fribourg, 23 janvier 1530: publiée par De Schepper, 'Erasmus's letter to Cornelius Crocus (Re)Discovered'; et reprise par Devroe, 'Een unieke Erasmusbriefen Amsterdalse schoolgrammatica'
- Ep. 2346A à Christoph Truchsess, Fribourg, 9 juillet 1530: Rummel, 'Ein unbekannter Brief von Erasmus'
- Ep. 2518A à Helius Eobanus Hessus, Fribourg, 11 août 1531: Bruehl, 'Zwei unbekannte Briefe von Erasmus'
- Ep. 2518B et 2525A, de Ferdinand de Habsbourg, respectivement datées du 11 et du 22 août 1531: Margolin, 'Érasme et Ferdinand de Habsbourg d'après deux lettres inédites'
- Ep. <3067A> (ou 3064A selon L. E. Halkin)<sup>16</sup> à Bonifacius Amerbach, Bâle, post. au 22 octobre 1535: fragment autographe mutilé publié dans *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, éd. par Hartmann, IV (1953), n° 1990, p. 381
- Ep. <3140A> d'Aonio Paleario, Sienne, 5 décembre 1536: Seidel Menchi, 'Alcuni atteggiamenti della cultura italiana di fronte a Erasmo' (voir Ep. 1270A). On hésite sur l'année: la traduction française (vol. XI, 461–67) suggère 1534 (elle serait numérotée 2980A) ou 1535 (3073A)
- s'y ajoute une lettre dont la datation reste incertaine, située dans une fourchette qui va de l'année 1533 à 1536, et dont on trouve le texte dans l'article suivant: Gil, 'Una carta de Rodrigo Tous de Monsalve a Erasmo'.

À cela, il faudrait ajouter les six lettres inédites signalées par H. de Vocht qui furent longtemps inaccessibles, comme le signalait L. E. Halkin,<sup>17</sup> mais qui restent susceptibles de ressurgir, à l'instar de la lettre 4909 de Dantiscus (?) à Érasme, supposée datée d'octobre 1531 (et qui pourrait à ce titre devenir l'Ep. 2561A), signalée dans le *Corpus of Ioannes Dantiscus' Texts & Correspondence*.<sup>18</sup> Ce simple exemple est lourd d'implications: ne conviendrait-il pas, pour présenter de la

<sup>16</sup> Halkin, 'Percy Stafford Allen', p. 23, n. 33.

<sup>17</sup> De Vocht, *John Dantiscus and his Netherlandish Friends*, pp. 104–10. La liste récapitulative figure p. 428: lettre de Dantiscus à Érasme (fin octobre 1531), lettre d'Érasme à Decius (début 1533), lettre de Dantiscus à Érasme (août 1533), lettre d'Érasme à Cochlaeus (24 novembre 1535), lettre d'Érasme à Decius (26 mai 1536), lettre d'Érasme à Cochlaeus (25 mai 1536); Halkin, 'Percy Stafford Allen', p. 23, n. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Je remercie Stephen Ryle et Olivier Pédeflous de m'avoir signalé cette information.

correspondance érasmiennne une physionomie plus complète, de comptabiliser toutes les lettres dont l'existence est avérée mais dont le texte n'a pas été retrouvé? Une telle question suffit à montrer combien un tel bilan, qui se voudrait pourtant exhaustif, risque de s'avérer un peu vain.

### *De quelques lettres non retenues par Allen et des problèmes que cela pose*

Que faire, pour continuer dans la même hypothèse, des lettres dont Allen avait connaissance et qu'il n'a pas retenues, telle la longue lettre de Thomas More à Martinus Dorpius (Ep. 363A) reprise, à la suite de l'édition de Leyde, dans la traduction française (mais non dans les *Collected Works of Erasmus*)? Elle n'appartient pas *stricto sensu* à la correspondance d'Érasme, qui n'en est ni le destinataire, ni le destinataire, mais elle n'y aurait pas moins droit de cité que la lettre de Guillaume Budé à Cuthbert Tunstall, retenue par Allen (Allen II, Ep. 583) à la suite d'Érasme, qui l'avait publiée dans son *Auctarium*. Allen a lui-même pris le parti de publier certaines des lettres écrites par — et adressés à — des tiers au sujet d'Érasme dans les 'Appendices' de son édition. Mais comment endiguer l'inflation qu'impliquerait la prise en compte de ces échanges? Faut-il retenir des lettres qui n'ont pas été envoyées, tel ce brouillon d'Aleandro, publié dans la traduction anglaise (Ep. 1324A)? Quel statut accorder aux lettres qui n'existent plus, mais dont on peut déduire — grâce au témoignage de la correspondance ou parce qu'elles sont mentionnées par tel ou tel chercheur — qu'elles ont existé?

De telles interrogations offrent l'occasion de revenir sur certains des choix effectués par Allen: guidé par un manifeste souci d'exhaustivité, il a rassemblé sans discrimination non seulement des lettres destinées de toute évidence à la publication — que ce soient des préfaces ou des lettres publiées en recueil — et des lettres privées, redécouvertes par hasard des siècles plus tard parce qu'elles avaient été gardées par l'un ou l'autre des correspondants d'Érasme, mais aussi des extraits d'œuvres lorsqu'elles se présentaient sous une forme épistolaire, voire des lettres qui, tout en étant adressées à un correspondant identifié, sont des modèles présents dans le *De Conscribendis Epistolis*. Dans cette perspective, pourquoi ne pas avoir intégré la lettre parue dans la *Querela Pacis*, que L. E. Halkin propose de numérotier 747A? La question pourrait se poser pour une lettre publiée dans le *De Conscribendis Epistolis*, 'Aliud exemplum de vita aulica' (ASD I-2, pp. 499–502),<sup>19</sup> ne serait-ce que parce qu'elle figure dans les éditions des lettres d'Érasme à partir de l'édition bâloise de 1538.

<sup>19</sup> Sur cette lettre, on pourra consulter la note de Jean-Claude Margolin (ASD I-2, p. 499) et

En ce qui concerne les préfaces, l'on pourrait penser qu'Allen s'autorise de la demande expressément formulée par Érasme dans le *Catalogus* pour intégrer des préfaces dans la production épistolaire. Pourtant, et de façon quelque peu incompréhensible, il n'a retenu que certaines des préfaces adressées 'au lecteur' et en a écarté d'autres. Des sept pièces liminaires qui accompagnent l'édition des œuvres de saint Jérôme, il n'a ainsi gardé que des extraits d'une lettre au lecteur (Ep. 326, Allen II, pp. 54–59) et de la préface à Warham (Ep. 396, Allen II, pp. 210–21). L'équipe de traduction française a choisi d'intégrer deux autres épîtres au lecteur omises par Allen: l'une, identifiée comme l'Ep. 1593A, figurait en tête de la *Lingua*;<sup>20</sup> l'autre, l'Ep. 1895A, se trouvait en ouverture des œuvres de saint Augustin.<sup>21</sup> L'équipe des *CWE* a pour sa part intégré une courte lettre 'Pio lectori' présente dans les *Supputationes in censuris Natalis Bedae* (Ep. 1807A, *CWE* 13, 54).

Or, s'il fallait effectivement intégrer les épîtres au lecteur à l'œuvre épistolaire, les volumes de la *Correspondance* deviendraient plus encombrants encore, tant la liste en est longue; contentons-nous de mentionner ici, outre l'appareil textuel de l'édition de Jérôme évoqué ci-dessus, l'avis au lecteur précédant *l'Apologia* contre Lee;<sup>22</sup> l'*Exhortatio ad studium Evangelicae lectionis* adressée au lecteur en tête de la *Paraphrase à Matthieu*, juste après l'épître dédicatoire à Charles Quint;<sup>23</sup> ou encore la préface 'ad lectorem' aux *Declamationes* de Sénèque, dans les *Opera Omnia* de 1529. Cette dernière, à la différence de la préface aux lettres prétendument échangées entre saint Paul et Sénèque (Allen VIII, Ep. 2092), et alors qu'elle présente tout autant d'intérêt, n'a pas été reprise par Allen.<sup>24</sup> On pourrait y ajouter la lettre sur l'index des *Adages*,<sup>25</sup> mais aussi la lettre ouverte qui apparaît en tête

Reedijk, 'Een voorstel tot adoptie'.

<sup>20</sup> L'existence de cette lettre a été signalée par Massaut, 'La Nouvelle édition des *Opera Omnia* d'Érasme', nn. pp. 314–16 et elle figure désormais dans l'édition d'Amsterdam, *ASD* IV-1A, p. 9, n. 2 (fac-similé pp. 4–5).

<sup>21</sup> Publiée par Bietenholz, *History and Biography in the Work of Erasmus*, pp. 103–05.

<sup>22</sup> Voir Vanautgaerden, 'Flosculi Erasmi I'. D'autres lettres inédites au lecteur (dont Érasme est l'auteur, ou auxquelles il a probablement participé lorsqu'elles sont signées par l'un de ses imprimeurs attirés) ont été mises au jour par Alexandre Vanautgaerden dans la série de petits articles suivante: Vanautgaerden, 'Flosculi Erasmi II'; Vanautgaerden, 'Flosculi Erasmi III'; Vanautgaerden, 'Flosculi Erasmi IV'; Vanautgaerden, 'Flosculi Erasmi V'; Vanautgaerden, 'Flosculi Erasmi VI'.

<sup>23</sup> Voir Erasmus, *Exhortatio ad studium Evangelicae Lectionis I*, éd. par Cottier.

<sup>24</sup> Elle est reproduite in Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, 'Appendices', pp. 201–03.

<sup>25</sup> Publiée et traduite par Vanautgaerden et Diu, 'Le Jardin d'abondance d'Érasme'. Résumé et nouvelle édition de la lettre par Vanautgaerden, 'La Lettre d'Érasme sur les index des *Adages*'.

de la seconde édition du *Nouveau Testament* (1519), enrichie de longs développements en 1527 et 1535 (*LB*, VI, \*\*3<sup>v</sup> — \*\*\*4<sup>r</sup>).<sup>26</sup>

La même démarche s'imposerait en ce qui concerne les extraits d'œuvres qui présentent une forme épistolaire, puisque Allen a par exemple retenu le début et la fin de l'*Enchiridion* (Allen I, Ep. 164) qui, en dehors de la formule de salutation et du fait que le texte est adressé, ne présente aucune caractéristique épistolaire nette. Il en va de même pour les extraits de la *Vidua Christiana*, dédiée à Marie de Hongrie (Allen VIII, Ep. 2100), le petit traité *De ciuilitate morum puerilium [...] libellus*, présenté à Henri de Bourgogne (Allen VIII, Ep. 2282) ou encore la *Paraphrasis in tertium Psalmum* adressée à Melchior Trevir Viandalus (Allen V, Ep. 1427). On pourrait multiplier les exemples à l'envi,<sup>27</sup> mais je me contenterai de souligner deux exemples de parti pris contradictoire: Allen n'a pas retenu la *Detectio praestigiarum cuiusdam libelli germanice scripti, ficto autoris titulo, cum hac inscriptione, Erasmi & Lutheri opiniones de Coena domini*, alors que le texte en est intégralement repris dans l'*Opus Epistolarum* de 1529 (p. 886) à quelques variantes près.<sup>28</sup> À l'inverse, Allen a décidé de publier l'*Epistola ad quosdam impudentissimos gracculos* (Allen VIII, Ep. 2275), courte 'apologie sous forme de lettre' certes, mais jamais reprise dans les *Epistolae* comme il le précise lui-même.

De même, s'il avait suivi les instructions d'Érasme, Allen aurait dû maintenir les poèmes figurant dans les recueils de lettres. Ainsi — entre bien d'autres exemples possibles — une lettre en vers de Kaspar Ursinus Velius (Ep. 1280A) est-elle présente, non sans raison, dans la traduction anglaise,<sup>29</sup> ou le poème figurant à l'origine dans Allen II, Ep. 506 a-t-il fait l'objet d'une publication critique.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Voir Rummel, 'An Open Letter to Boorish Critics'.

<sup>27</sup> Je me permets de renvoyer à ma thèse (Bénévent, 'La Correspondance d'Érasme'), où je développe plus longuement la réflexion sur la question dans une partie intitulée 'Tous les textes publiés par Allen sont-ils des lettres?'.

<sup>28</sup> Erasmus, *Detectio praestigiarum*. En fait Allen n'en a retenu qu'un extrait, où est citée la réponse d'Érasme au Conseil de Bâle, à propos du livre d'Écolampade sur l'Eucharistie (Allen VI, Ep. 1636).

<sup>29</sup> *CWE* 9 (1989), 76–84.

<sup>30</sup> Morales Lara, 'Un poema de Álar Gómez'. Voir aussi, Morales Lara, 'Bajo el pseudónimo del remitente de una carta a Erasmo'. Je remercie Jeanine De Landtsheer, qui m'a signalé cette référence. La question de l'identification des correspondants d'Érasme aurait sans doute pu faire l'objet d'un développement dans cet article, mais il a fallu faire des choix.

### *En guise de conclusion*

Comme je l'ai déjà suggéré, l'enjeu est d'abord méthodologique: où commence et où s'arrête le genre épistolaire? Qu'est-ce qu'une lettre? Si P. S. Allen avait voulu répondre à ces questions avant de constituer l'*Opus Epistolarum*, s'il avait dû retenir des critères stricts, leur justification et leur application auraient sans doute pu faire, dès avant la publication, l'objet d'une thèse.<sup>31</sup>

Mais je voudrais insister sur le fait que l'enjeu est aussi matériel: si Allen a dû renoncer à publier certains textes, ou à n'en donner que des extraits, c'est aussi parce qu'ils étaient trop longs, tout simplement, pour figurer dans une édition papier déjà volumineuse.

Cela peut conduire à affirmer qu'en vérité, les 'défauts' de cette édition (si je puis les appeler ainsi) sont, pour une large part, imputables au support papier, qui se prête difficilement à l'édition d'une 'correspondance générale', entreprise totalisante et, il faut bien le reconnaître, un peu 'indigeste': le manque de maniabilité et la place que prennent ces volumes interdisent en général de les consulter ailleurs qu'en bibliothèque. Aussi est-il sans doute nécessaire, comme le préconisait Loïc Chotard,<sup>32</sup> de remettre en question le mode de communication de ces recherches: peut-être la correspondance générale est-elle incompatible avec la forme livre. À vrai dire, la correspondance d'Érasme engage une lecture à géométrie variable que seule rendrait possible aujourd'hui une édition numérisée.

Une édition numérisée permettrait d'abord une exploitation simple et rapide des données sémantiques, facilitant les nombreuses études thématiques auxquelles se prête un tel corpus; elle pallierait aussi les défauts souvent reprochés à l'index de l'édition Allen qui, étant donné l'ampleur du corpus, représentait une véritable gageure. En outre, l'édition Allen ayant provoqué un regain d'intérêt pour l'œuvre érasmienne, il deviendrait possible d'intégrer les textes découverts au cours des cinquante dernières années, y compris les plus longs, mais aussi d'améliorer l'apparat critique sans pour autant sacrifier le système de référence — la 'numérotation Allen' — que tous les chercheurs utilisent depuis des années.<sup>33</sup> Les plans qui

<sup>31</sup> Sur ces questions, on pourra consulter (en se limitant au domaine français) la thèse HDR, malheureusement inédite, de Magnien, 'Pasquier épistolier'; Gueudet, *L'Art de la lettre humaniste*; Vaillancourt, *La Lettre familière au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*; La Charité, *La Rhétorique épistolaire de Rabelais*.

<sup>32</sup> Chotard, 'Les Correspondances: une histoire illisible'.

<sup>33</sup> Estes, 'The Achievement of P. S. Allen', relève certaines faiblesses dans les annotations fournies par Allen, notamment sur le plan historique et pour les références bibliques. Il faut dire que, comme J. M. Estes le souligne, les lettres d'Érasme sont tissées de si nombreuses citations qu'il y a là de quoi rendre un annotateur fou.



se superposent sur l'écran informatique, alors que le papier ne se déploie que sur une surface unique, offrent la possibilité d'activer ou non les liens vers les annotations, qui pourraient de ce fait être plus amplement développées sans étouffer le texte: cela faciliterait notamment l'identification des différents interlocuteurs, dont P. G. Bietenholz a coordonné le très utile dictionnaire biographique dans les années 1980. Mais surtout, l'outil informatique rendrait possibles différents modes d'entrée dans la correspondance: le lecteur serait à même de multiplier les approches du texte, selon qu'il décide de lire l'un des recueils publiés par Érasme, ou bien une correspondance particulière avec un interlocuteur donné, ou bien une série typologique particulière (lettres au lecteur, préfaces, etc.), ou encore une séquence chronologique. Il pourrait aussi comparer les différents états, y compris manuscrits, d'une même lettre, sans être soumis à la contrainte à laquelle Allen a dû se plier, de livrer au public une version lisible des textes, quitte à les recomposer et à en inventer une forme qui n'avait jamais existé auparavant.

Bref, pour rendre justice au 'poulpe' de la correspondance érasmienne, dont Allen a donné sans doute l'édition définitive sous forme papier, il convient aujourd'hui de lui donner les moyens de s'ébattre dans l'espace élastique du numérique.



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## THE ENGLISHING OF P. S. ALLEN

James McConica

The link between the topic of this paper and the theme of the Oxford conference is sufficiently obvious. Allen's first volume appeared in 1906. The eighth and subsequent volumes of his remarkable enterprise were completed by his widow and by H. W. Garrod, the last, volume XI, appearing forty years on in 1947. Garrod had of course been Allen's neighbour at Merton during Allen's years at Corpus. In the interval F. M. Nichols's three volumes of *The Epistles of Erasmus*, published from 1901 to 1918, seem for long to have sated the curiosity of most non-specialists with any interest in the subject. Then in 1974, some sixty-eight years after the first of Allen's, the first volume of a comprehensive rendering of Allen's edition into English was published in Toronto.<sup>1</sup>

Other papers draw, quite properly, on the wider themes of contemporary interest in Erasmus and the republic of letters. This one is intended to account for the genesis of what became in short order, the *Collected Works of Erasmus*, and I shall do so with particular reference to the Correspondence Volumes with which that series began. I shall explain the approach that was then decided upon, and who it was who did the deciding.

It is important to understand at the outset that the Toronto project took its origins not from the converging concerns of scholars but from within a university press. I find it unimaginable that it could otherwise have come to pass. Sponsorship by University of Toronto Press provided a guarantee of continuity that any contributor would want in order to justify setting aside other commitments, and it also facilitated greatly our securing funding both for research and publication. In retrospect it seems fairly clear now that interest in Erasmus was

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Correspondence*, trans. by Mynors and Thomson.

on the rise in the post-war years, a development underscored by the coincidental launching of the new, critical edition of Erasmus's *Opera omnia* by the Royal Dutch Academy and the International Union of Academies.<sup>2</sup> It is also clear that it was the emergence of Allen's edition that lay behind the rather indistinct Erasmian revival in the inter-war years, more evident on the Continent than in England. Initially, however, the Toronto project focused without any other ambition on the only significant body of Erasmus's writings available in a critical edition, Allen's *Epistolae*.<sup>3</sup>

By taking soundings throughout the scholarly community the interested parties at University of Toronto Press soon discovered a hidden network of facilitators. It was learned that Margaret Mann Phillips was proposing a revision of Nichols's three volumes, and that Sir Roger Mynors had expressed willingness to collaborate.<sup>4</sup> In Toronto, Richard J. Schoeck in the English Faculty was already prominent in More scholarship, and I found myself consulted as the author of a recent monograph on the background to the English Reformation in which — to its author's surprise — Erasmus had emerged as a leading preoccupation. Wallace Ferguson, who had returned only recently to Canada after his official retirement at New York University, was recruited at the neighbouring University of Western Ontario. Gratifyingly, Clarendon Press granted permission to make full use of Allen's critical edition, and in an international conference in 1969 that marked the appearance of the *début* volume of the new critical edition,<sup>5</sup> a working relationship was established with the Amsterdam edition of the *Opera omnia*.<sup>6</sup> At the same meetings, Sir Roger Mynors was added to the small group intrigued by the Toronto proposal.

<sup>2</sup> See McConica, 'Erasmus in Amsterdam and Toronto'.

<sup>3</sup> To add the only other critical editions then widely available (Ferguson and Holborn) is only to underscore the paucity of such foundational texts at the time.

<sup>4</sup> A discovery of my own in 1968 during a conference on Erasmus in New York that was sponsored jointly by Fordham University and Union Theological Seminary. Mrs Phillips was in attendance as was Roland Bainton, whose attitude to the Toronto project at the time was typically succinct: 'Let them learn Latin'.

<sup>5</sup> *ASD* 1-1 (1969).

<sup>6</sup> The Toronto group was greeted with great courtesy tempered by delicate reserve. Cornelis Reedijk, President of the Conseil international pour l'Édition des oeuvres complètes d'Érasme was, however, strongly supportive of collaboration, as was Drs Clemens Bruehl, Secretary of the Conseil. Bruehl was appointed to the Advisory Committee of the *CWE*.

I shall say no more about the foundational months of *CWE* which are recorded elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> save that the comparatively modest proposal to render the *Epistolae* into English led within a few months to a commitment — in the words of an authoritative account — ‘to an edition as comprehensive as possible within the limits of translation’, an edition that was intended to provide complete texts in place of the growing accumulation of ‘scattered and partial collections of individual texts’, some of which, it had to be said, were strikingly remote from anything resembling responsible scholarship.<sup>8</sup>

In the beginning, then, it was decided to tackle Allen whilst other parts of the long series were being thought out and assigned. A Coordinating Editor headed the first Editorial Board, a post held for two years (1968–70) by R. J. Schoeck, then by Beatrice Corrigan, a senior professor of Italian in the University of Toronto. There were two Literary Editors, R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, a Toronto classicist who had published on Erasmus. These were paired with two Historical Editors, Wallace Ferguson and myself.

From the outset the aim was to accept the *Erasmi epistolae* as our base text.<sup>9</sup> This was mandated by the situation and the desire of the Press to see its venture bear fruit, a desire shared by the original Maecenas of this editorial project, the Killam Program of the Canada Council. In any event, there was no thought of going behind Allen. The attitude was well explained in Wallace Ferguson’s introduction to the first volume: ‘The arrangement of the letters in chronological order was a necessary first step toward making them a usable source for Erasmus’s biographers’.<sup>10</sup> Leclerc’s pioneering effort to address the chronological confusion in which Erasmus’s correspondence had been left was next addressed by F. M. Nichols, who printed a register of the letters from the earliest and least ordered period. Allen had begun while Nichols was still at work, and the ordering of the letters was to him a matter of prime concern.<sup>11</sup> A study of the informative

<sup>7</sup> See: McConica and Schoeffel, ‘The Collected Works of Erasmus’.

<sup>8</sup> McConica and Schoeffel, ‘The Collected Works of Erasmus’, p. 317.

<sup>9</sup> In 1969 the Conseil had as yet made no decision about revisiting Allen’s *Epistolae* and reserved the decision to a later time. Subsequently it was decided not to undertake a revision, recognition in part of the achievement of the correspondence series in *CWE*.

<sup>10</sup> *CWE* 1, xxii. Wallace Ferguson’s Introduction is an overview of the history of the *Epistolae*, *CWE* 1, ix–xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> ‘One has the feeling that this [establishing the date of each letter] was the task that Allen saw as his greatest challenge and from which he derived the greatest satisfaction’. See Estes, ‘The Achievement of P. S. Allen’, p. 293.

question of how the letters had come originally to be presented to their public was a project for a later time.

The general approach is summarized in the Editors' Note to Volume One, which translated the first half of Allen's initial volume:

The editors' primary aim has been to provide in the introductions to the individual letters and in the notes on the text the information needed to make each letter intelligible and to place it in its proper context, to identify the persons and events mentioned in it, to note the sources of classical, biblical, or patristic quotations and, finally, through a system of cross-references to guide the reader to other relevant places in the correspondence.

It was simply stated, but despite Allen's truly remarkable thoroughness in filling out the known corpus and his equally enduring dating of the letters, each one of these requisites required a careful revisiting of Allen's original production, sometimes coupled with substantial amplification.<sup>12</sup>

On the matter of identifying correspondents and others mentioned in the correspondence, Allen had served many historians as a kind of biographical register of the period. It was decided that just such an undertaking would facilitate the work of the whole series by gathering together the names of all such persons for a kind of collective biography. The result was the three volumes, *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, carried out by Peter Bietenholz and Thomas Deutscher.<sup>13</sup>

With respect to historical annotation in general, Wallace Ferguson's admonition was, 'We are not going to write the history of the Reformation.' Annotation was to be precise, apposite to the matter at hand, and with the addition only of the most essential, critical bibliography. Anything that could be judged to be of ephemeral importance, however interesting, was to be shunned on the grounds that all secondary literature would in time be superseded. It must be said that this discipline has been easier to observe in annotation of the Correspondence Series than in the volumes given over to the Works, but the general rule stands.

Another responsibility with respect to manuscript sources was to discover the present location of what Allen had used. This proved in some cases to be a considerable task, given the upheaval of World War II and the inaccessibility of libraries in the Soviet Union. It is pleasant here to pay tribute to the assistance received in so many ways from the distinguished Slavonic bibliographer, John Simmons

<sup>12</sup> I am here tracking the article by Estes quoted above (Estes, 'The Achievement of P. S. Allen'), which provides a detailed assessment both of Allen's career in this pioneering achievement and of the strengths and limitations of the *Epistolae*.

<sup>13</sup> *CEBR*.



whose industry and erudition had earned him a place of honour in the Soviet world as it had in our own.<sup>14</sup>

A further special issue was the problem of coinage, a matter of no small interest to Erasmus himself. The repeated references to money and coinage in the correspondence provided an opportunity to make this unique resource available with a systematic, ongoing series of appendices. Fortunately, expert assistance was at hand in the person of John H. Munro, medievalist and economic historian of the Low Countries in the University of Toronto. Professor Munro's initial appendix on, 'Money and Coinage in the Age of Erasmus'<sup>15</sup> was continued in each successive volume up to the virtual monograph of some one hundred and fifty pages in Volume Twelve entitled, 'Money, Wages and Real Incomes in the Age of Erasmus'. Munro's series of appendixes supplies a feature of the Correspondence Series that well exemplifies an injunction of Sir Roger Mynors, to 'Give them everything we can for their money's worth.'

The task of the Literary Editors was in some respects subtler. Erasmus's sinewy, often allusive style required mastery both of his Latin and of modern English to a degree that is not to be found everywhere. There was also the inevitable question of how closely the translation should adhere to the Latin original, its level and tone, and of maintaining consistency between successive translators. It was decided that the two Literary Editors should exchange versions until there was a measure of concord in all of this, with a resolve to aim at English prose as enduring as could be managed. Each of the editors also submitted sample translations to the other, establishing a practice that has been followed ever since for any translator recruited to any part of the *CWE*. When in due course it was necessary to replace Douglas Thomson, his successor, Alexander Dalzell — also of the Toronto faculty — was vetted anonymously. For obvious reasons it has been thought necessary to keep the number of translators in the Correspondence Series to an absolute minimum, and to date there have been only four; in addition to the three already mentioned, Charles Fantazzi made his appearance in the same way when the series lost Sir Roger Mynors.

It was agreed that the responsibility of the Literary Editors should extend to classical annotation and to cross-references to other works of Erasmus. In practice this has tended to be a joint task of all involved. Allen's classical references were

<sup>14</sup> J. S. G. Simmons OBE, FSA joined the Advisory Committee of *CWE* in 1978; he resigned in 2004 and died in 2005 at the age of 90 years.

<sup>15</sup> *CWE* 1, 311–47: 'An historical and analytical glossary with particular reference to France, the Low Countries, England, the Rhineland and Italy'.

exiguous at best; a distinguished classicist was heard to remark, 'He only identified the authors he recognized from Eton'. The same applies to his spotty and inconsistent references to Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and indeed to other works of Erasmus of which he would have been well aware, most notably the *Adagia*. It seems clear that by assembling as many of the letters as he could, by doing his best to establish their chronology and to identify Erasmus's correspondents and others mentioned in the letters, he fulfilled his chief objectives. It was no mean achievement.

As an annotator myself, I should say at once that the way in which Scripture permeates almost everything Erasmus wrote, and the almost equally ubiquitous allusions to the *Adagia* temper my own expectations on this score. Moreover, it is clear that Allen was by training, not a historian but a classical scholar, that he faced a task of unknown proportions when he set out on his quest, and that he had few if any precedents to follow, at least from within his own field of expertise. The solidity of his chronology, the comprehensiveness of his collection and the success with which he identified such a large population of individuals who were otherwise little known to scholarship at the time — these successes have insured the survival of Allen's edition for the foreseeable future.<sup>16</sup>

The greatest opportunity for *CWE*, and indeed its greatest obligation, has been to take into account the comparatively few additional letters discovered since Allen's day, to correct dates and attributions where necessary, and above all to amplify the historical annotation in a fashion that could never be applied to a new critical edition, even if one were envisaged.<sup>17</sup> This task at once raised the question of the audience: for whom were we working? It seemed fairly clear that they would be an educated audience with a more than casual interest in our subject, although specialists would use the critical texts. At the same time, and *pace* Roland Bainton,<sup>18</sup> we knew perfectly well that many historians of the period — 'specialists' in their own domain — would be, like many other serious students, more than happy to have an English version of the letters both for their personal use and for their classrooms.

An important decision at the outset was that to remove the *Catalogus lucubrationum* from Allen I, presumably located there because he thought that it would

<sup>16</sup> 'On the basis of his extremely wide knowledge of the printed and unprinted sources, Allen identifies, sometimes definitely, sometimes tentatively, nearly all the persons mentioned or alluded to in the text'. Estes, "The Achievement of P. S. Allen," p. 295.

<sup>17</sup> See n. 9 above.

<sup>18</sup> See n. 4 above.

be usefully available to anyone then taking up the study of Erasmus, and instead to place it appropriately in the sequence of letters (as Ep. 1341A) where its extensive annotation by James Estes has provided an invaluable historical and bibliographical document, uniquely available in *CWE*.

In each volume an introductory essay gives the historical editor an opportunity to supply the reader with an overview of the volume in hand, to identify the main issues covered and to sketch the historical environment of the exchanges in that span of time. Beyond that I can only say that each annotator proceeds with one eye on the general scene and another on the issues of the text and, quite apart from correcting where Allen went astray, or was simply uninformed, will use opportunities to enlarge on specifics that invite more detailed treatment, all of this while adhering to Wallace Ferguson's firm instruction not to embark on a history of the Reformation.

If I may illustrate further from my own experience, the year 1515 was a momentous one for northern humanism, as this audience is very well aware. The names of Thomas More, Martin Dorp, Leo X, John Fisher, Ulrich Zasius, Paul Volz and numerous others of equal interest march in serried ranks across the running titles in the correspondence. The annotator's task is fairly straightforward, but in December Erasmus composed his epistle 'To the Reader' introducing the *Novum Instrumentum*.<sup>19</sup> It need not have been, but it seemed to be a perfect opportunity to draw together the 'state of the question' on Erasmus's preparation for this moment: his tuition in Greek; his edition of Jerome's letters which led him to compare the Septuagint Greek text of some Psalms with the Vulgate version, and to conclude that the Latin text could only be understood by comparison with the Greek from which it had been taken. His concurrent study of Origen, his ongoing commentary on the Epistles of St Paul, and not least, of course, his discovery in the abbey of Parc of a manuscript of Valla's annotations on the New Testament all entered into the story. While this made for a longish introduction, it was one that proved useful repeatedly in subsequent annotation.

It was useful not least in the subsequent introduction to Epistle 384 addressed to Pope Leo X,<sup>20</sup> in which Erasmus set forth his editorial principles and procedures. Here one could summarize the evolution of the first edition of 1516, prepared in such haste, to the fourth and definitive edition (Froben

<sup>19</sup> Ep. 373, *CWE* 3, 198–205; the introduction, including the title page of the *Novum Instrumentum*, runs from pp. 195–98.

<sup>20</sup> *CWE* 3, 221–24. The introduction, including a plate from Codex 2e in the Öffentliche Bibliothek, University of Basel, runs from pp. 216–21.

1527) that incorporated many readings from the critical Complutensian text. Of particular interest was the possibility since Allen's time of providing an updated guide to the Greek manuscripts actually used by Erasmus, with the Gregory numbers,<sup>21</sup> as well as those in Henri Omont's *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs des bibliothèques de Suisse [...] et Zürich*,<sup>22</sup> which was available to Allen but not cited. And it was appropriate in *CWE* to include Hilary Wayment's identification of Erasmus's translation of the New Testament in the lower register of the chapel windows in King's College, Cambridge, likely the decision of Richard Foxe who was given supervision of the work.<sup>23</sup>

Again, *CWE* Volume 4 reveals Erasmus's carefully orchestrated campaign to secure release from some of the obligations of his canonical status. In the absence of any extended discussion of Erasmus's various dispensations, and given persistent assumptions that he had been relieved of his vows, or the priesthood, or both, or that he was obsessed by his illegitimacy, it was interesting to scrutinize the exact nature of the two major dispensations he received from the Holy See. The first of these was of course from Julius II in 1506,<sup>24</sup> the second from Leo X eleven years later.

The key letters are those to Leo X and 'Lambertus Grunnius' in 1516 (Epp. 446, 447), which open the volume, and Pope Leo's to Andrea Ammonio in January 1517 (Ep. 517). As I have explained my interest in these at sufficient length in those introductions I shall say no more about them here, except to remark that Allen's very brief comments, noting that Erasmus was concerned to be dispensed from the need to wear distinctive religious garb, to be free to earn his own living, and that he stood in some real fear of being recalled to Steyn seem to me to have stood the test of time better than any of the conjectures emanating from later psycho-historians. Whether or not Allen knew that simply by not wearing his canonical garb Erasmus was open to the charge of apostasy, or that as an illegitimate, he had to refer to this fact on each occasion that he was appointed to a benefice, he did not follow the path taken by Erasmus's hostile Catholic biographer J. J. Mangan, whose speculations over the phrase, *de illicito et, ut timet, incesto damnatoque coitu genitus* — 'being the offspring of an unlawful and (as he

<sup>21</sup> C. R. Gregory; cf. Aland, *Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften*.

<sup>22</sup> Omont, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs des bibliothèques de Suisse*. Allen placed his attentive account of Erasmus's manuscript authorities in his introduction to Ep. 373.

<sup>23</sup> Wayment, *The Windows of King's College Chapel*, p. 35; cf. *CWE* 3, 220.

<sup>24</sup> See *CWE* 2, Ep. 187A, published by Allen originally in the *English Historical Review* in 1910, and later in the Addenda to Allen III, pp. xxix–xxx.

fears) incestuous and condemned union'<sup>25</sup> — have led many modern commentators into the Serbonian bog of psychoanalytic theory.

On a final note, the Literary Editors could have their moments to indulge special interests, too. On 26 January 1517 in Rome, Jacopo Sadoleto in his capacity as the pope's Domestic Secretary dispatched a letter to Erasmus over the papal seal spelling out in some detail what amounted to Erasmus's licence henceforth to live by his wits.<sup>26</sup> It took the form of a single Latin sentence from the end of the salutation<sup>27</sup> to the conclusion of the letter, thirty-six lines in Allen's text. Roger Mynors undertook to repeat the feat in English. His success may be judged in *CWE* Volume 4 from line 5 to line 45. At the very least, it was a salutation across five centuries of humanistic aspiration.

<sup>25</sup> Allen II, Ep. 517. 7–8; *CWE* 4, 190, ll. 9–10. See my note in *CWE* 4, 189. The late Leonard Boyle informed me that the same description of Erasmus's father as *solutus* — that is an unmarried man rather than a cleric — appears in the *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers*, ed. by Bliss and others, XVIII: *Pius III and Julius II: Vatican Registers (1503–1513)*, *Lateran Registers (1503–1508)*, ed. by Michael J. Haren (1989), nos. 587 and 588 (for the year 1506).

<sup>26</sup> Allen II, Ep. 518.

<sup>27</sup> Allen II, Ep. 518, l. 4, 'Hinc est [...]' to l. 40; cf. *CWE* 4, 195–97, ll. 5–45, 'Hence it is [...]'.

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Section II.  
Erasmus and his Contemporaries





# JULIUS, ERASMUS, HUTTEN: A DIALOGUE IN THREE VOICES

Silvana Seidel Menchi

*Translated from the Italian by Mark Roberts*

**T**his essay has three aims. The first is to shed light on an aspect of Erasmus's life that has hitherto remained obscure: the traumatic background to his conflict with Ulrich von Hutten. I intend to show that there developed between these two humanists, in parallel with the explicit dialogue well known to students of Erasmus,<sup>1</sup> a subterranean dialogue, consisting of coded references that only the two people directly concerned were capable of deciphering. This subterranean dialogue has been overlooked by Erasmus specialists, because they have not been aware of the main premise: the key role played by Hutten in the publication of Erasmus's most embarrassing work — the pamphlet against Pope Julius II.<sup>2</sup>

It was Hutten who saw the pamphlet through the press: to demonstrate that this was the case is my second aim. The controversy between the two humanists revolved around a secret centre: the authorship of the anti-papal dialogue, the

<sup>1</sup> In this essay I publish some findings of my critical edition of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis*, in *ASD* I–8, pp. 1–298. An abstract of this essay was circulated in the winter of 2005–06 to those attending the conference 'Erasmus and the Republic of Letters', Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 5–7 September 2006. For reasons of space, I do not in this essay set out the reasons for and against the attribution to Erasmus of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus*: this debate is examined in my critical edition.

A clear and balanced reconstruction of the conflict between Erasmus and Hutten is supplied by Cornelis Augustijn in his introduction to *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, pp. 93–114. Still useful is Kaegi, 'Hutten und Erasmus'.

<sup>2</sup> *Erasmus, Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, pp. 48–124.

circumstances of its publication, and Erasmus's solemn denials of responsibility. The controversy was conducted in print, and is characterized by sorrowful disappointment on the part of Hutten, and by trepidation and anxiety on that of Erasmus. For the disciple felt betrayed and abandoned by the master, while the master dreaded that his embittered disciple would reveal the true identity of the dialogue's author, and that he — Erasmus — would be exposed as a liar before all of Europe.

My third aim is to show that Hutten's anti-papal polemic is an emanation of the dialogue against Julius, the authorship of which had been solemnly denied by Erasmus. Although Hutten had been an eye-witness of Julius's furious military activities, having sojourned in Rome in 1512/13, his aversion to the papacy as an institution did not coagulate around the figure of this pope until 1517/18. Why this delay? Why choose as the object of one's polemic a pope who some four or five years previously had disappeared from the European political, military, and religious scene? The delay with which Hutten discovered and utilized the figure of Julius II as proof of the degeneration of the Roman Church can be explained by the chronology of the composition and circulation of the satirical dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis*. Among Erasmus's very closest friends the dialogue had circulated in 1516, probably even in 1515, but it did not reach Hutten's hands until 1517. His intense and feverish reading of the pamphlet had on Hutten the effect of a revelation. The fervent disciple devoured the master's satire with the greatest enthusiasm, and thus it was that Hutten's anti-Roman aversion focused on the figure of Julius II. Through Hutten's writings, certain features of Julius that Erasmus had delineated with such polemical violence found their way into Protestant propaganda's notion of the pope as Antichrist.

These three interconnected theses throw light not only on the intellectual biography of Erasmus but also on modes of communication in the world of humanism. The reconstruction I set out below reveals the existence of two distinct circuits of communication: a closed one that was reserved for initiates, and an open one for the general public that operated through the press. The existence of these two circuits will be briefly expounded at the conclusion of the present essay.

### *1. Erasmus and Hutten: The Subterranean Dialogue*

In 1523 the humanist circles of the Rhineland, permeated by the ferment of the Reformation, followed with rapt attention the conflict between Desiderius Erasmus and Ulrich von Hutten, his most ardent German supporter. A member of the minor imperial nobility, Hutten had been crowned poet by the emperor

Maximilian in 1517, and had made friends with Erasmus in 1514. From then onwards, at every meeting and in every letter Hutten paid a glowing tribute of admiration and love. He liked to compare his relationship to Erasmus with that of Alcibiades to Socrates. The battle on behalf of Johann Reuchlin and the success of the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* had reinforced the link between the two of them, even though Erasmus did not always approve of the harsh polemical tone favoured by Hutten.<sup>3</sup> Their actual meetings were very few, not more than three (1514, 1515, 1520), but their correspondence was fervid on the part of the disciple, benevolent and encouraging on the part of the master. In 1520 Hutten had clamorously aligned himself with Luther and had declared his own personal war against the priests (*Pfaffenkrieg*), which Luther had observed with some embarrassment, and Erasmus with very great embarrassment.<sup>4</sup> The old friendship, which cooled down but was not extinguished in 1520, came to a sudden end in 1523 amid furious disagreement. None of the innumerable controversies that embittered the second half of Erasmus's life affected him to the extent that this one did. The occasion that ignited Hutten's anger and inspired an 'atrocious libel' against his formerly beloved master was his stay in Basle during the winter of 1522/23 and Erasmus's refusal to meet him during those six weeks.<sup>5</sup>

All Europe had paid the closest attention to the falling-out between Luther and Zwingli, so a meeting between Erasmus and Hutten — the protagonist of the *Pfaffenkrieg* — would undoubtedly have been fraught with symbolic significance, even though the *Pfaffenkrieg* had been a failure, indeed for that very reason. Thus the resentment of Hutten, deeply offended by Erasmus's refusal,<sup>6</sup> was not really an over-reaction. Yet the 'atrocious libel' with which Hutten gave vent to his rage and disappointment took the form of an extremely virulent personal attack. At its heart was the great theme of simulation and dissimulation, of truth and falsehood. Hutten took Erasmus to task, face to face, his tone of 'ardent prayer' continually alternating with one of 'recrimination':<sup>7</sup> he accused Erasmus of being two-faced and ignoble, of telling each interlocutor what he wanted to hear. Erasmus had no inner convictions, he adapted himself to circumstances. He had

<sup>3</sup> Rummel, *The Case Against Johann Reuchlin*.

<sup>4</sup> Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten*; Grimm, *Ulrich von Hutten: Wille und Schicksal*.

<sup>5</sup> Kaegi, 'Hutten und Erasmus', pp. 200–78.

<sup>6</sup> Erasmus turned down Hutten's request for a meeting on the grounds that he could not bear overheated rooms in winter, a very feeble excuse. See the introduction to *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, pp. 97–99.

<sup>7</sup> *Ulrich von Hutten, Expostulatio* (1523).

the very same ideas as Luther, but had denied him and continued to deny him. Hutten explained the duplicity and inconstancy of Erasmus as shameless political and religious opportunism, as the calculated desire to side with the most powerful, as greed for the benefits and prestige granted by prelates and potentates, and lastly as congenital cowardice.

In 1523 Hutten was still speaking 'with' Erasmus, not 'against' Erasmus: but it was this feeling of being apostrophized directly, this attack on his personal morality and character (rather than on his doctrine), that so traumatized Erasmus. Never before had he experienced anything of the kind. His reply was defensive: he picked carefully over all the personal arguments, defending himself at great length against each single accusation, trying to demonstrate his own consistency, claiming that he had always kept his distance from Luther. Significantly, he called this reply *Spongia*: a sponge to clean off the mud that Hutten had flung at him.<sup>8</sup>

Hitherto I have briefly noted the main themes of the explicit dialogue between the two interlocutors. I now intend to demonstrate the existence of a subterranean dialogue that is interwoven with the explicit one and proceeds by allusions. Some of these allusions I shall explain.

I begin with Erasmus. It is indeed Erasmus himself who reveals that his dialogue with Hutten contains encoded passages: there were, in his *Spongia*, 'certain things that only Hutten would have understood'.<sup>9</sup> What things? Once again it is Erasmus himself who tells us. Hutten, he explains, is guilty of the unauthorized publication of Erasmus's writings: for example, Hutten has 'treacherously' printed a confidential letter in defence of Luther, directed to Albert of Brandenburg the elector of Mainz,<sup>10</sup> which Erasmus had entrusted to Hutten in confidence.<sup>11</sup> But 'treacheries' of this kind — the divulging of secrets and the subsequent recriminations — were out in the open, and Erasmus publicly castigated them as breaches of trust: there was nothing here that 'only Hutten would have

<sup>8</sup> Erasmus, *Spongia [...] adversus aspergines Hutteni* (1523).

<sup>9</sup> 'Nunc quaedam insunt quae solus Huttenus erat intellecturus': the phrase occurs in the preface to the second edition of the *Spongia* ('Erasmus Roterodamus candido lectori'), which Erasmus wrote after receiving news of Hutten's death, *Erasmus, Spongia, ed. by Augustijn*, p. 118, ll. 37–38; Allen v, Ep. 1389. 3–4.

<sup>10</sup> Allen iv, Ep. 1033 (19 October 1519). Hutten was at that time 'consiliarius' to Albert of Brandenburg (Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten*, pp. 80–81).

<sup>11</sup> *Erasmus, Spongia, ed. by Augustijn*, pp. 192–93, ll. 705–25 (in this passage Erasmus complains that 'prodita est fides in mandatis amici', l. 721). This 'betrayal' was followed by others: the compilation and unauthorized publication of a selection of passages from Erasmus in German. *Erasmus, Spongia, ed. by Augustijn*, p. 194, ll. 729–32.

understood'.<sup>12</sup> There had been, however, other and graver incivilities. Concerning these Erasmus expresses himself elliptically: there were 'certain other things, that were made public even more wickedly' (or 'with more heedless violence').<sup>13</sup> In fine, Hutten was guilty of having sent to the printers (*evulgatio*) private papers belonging to Erasmus, and thus of having violated the fundamental rules of human intercourse (*civilitas*). The most serious of these offences were those that Erasmus did not specify. Hutten, who had been privy to Erasmus's secrets, would certainly have understood the allusion.

The betrayal of trust that had grown up in friendship, the revealing of secrets that had been confided friend to friend (*proditio*), is a recurring theme in the *Spongia*. It is evident that Erasmus dreaded an 'even more serious' incivility than unauthorized publication: he was mortally afraid that one of his intimates might make use of his confidential private letters, written in a spirit of trust and friendship,<sup>14</sup> to launch an attack upon him.<sup>15</sup> From such nefarious behaviour, Erasmus asserted, he himself had always abstained: 'I have former friends who have become my deadly enemies, prepared for any trickery to encompass my ruin. But I have never had the heart to employ against them secrets dating from our time of intimacy, nor the letters we then exchanged'. Anyone who committed such a crime would exclude himself 'from the society of men', would degrade himself to the level of the beasts.<sup>16</sup> This is meant to be a warning: it is not Erasmus who needs to guard himself from such a fate, but Hutten.

<sup>12</sup> Allen iv, Ep. 1153. 162–67, Ep. 1167, 111–18, Ep. 1217, 20–25.

<sup>13</sup> 'Alia quaedam incivilius etiam euulgata', *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 183, ll. 463–64.

<sup>14</sup> 'Maioris etiam inciuitatis est, criminationem struere ex his quae amici freti fide nostra libere nobiscum nugantur per literas', *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 172, ll. 153–58.

<sup>15</sup> 'Quis autem non existimet ex omnium hominum consortio deturbandum, si ego nunc rebus exulceratis proferre velim quae amici liberis epistolis ad me perscripserunt aut mea fide freti apud me effutierunt, etiam si ex amicis facti essent inimici?' *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 138, ll. 414–17. Erasmus speaks in the first person, as though the temptation to reveal a secret entrusted in confidence by a former friend were something that regarded him personally. It was a way of maintaining a disguise.

<sup>16</sup> 'Habeo qui ex intimis amicis mihi facti sunt capitales hostes, nihil non molientes in exitium meum. Nunquam tamen sustinuit animus meus ut vel e secretis colloquiis dum constaret familiaritas habitis, vel ex epistolis quicquam illis obiicerem. Tum enim mihi dignus viderer, qui ex vniuerso hominum contubernio in ferarum consortium protruderer', *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 172, ll. 153–58.

But what was the secret which was known to Hutten and which Erasmus so feared being made public? What was the accusation that Hutten was apparently able to document from Erasmus's own letters?

The authorship of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus*: this was the secret that Erasmus feared being revealed by Hutten. Unauthorized publication of the same dialogue: this was the 'more serious incivility' (*maior incivilitas*) of which Erasmus accused him. Not only did Hutten know who had written the anonymous dialogue, but he was capable of proving what he knew: this is why Erasmus appealed to his loyalty and to the humanist cult of friendship, which remained sacred even if it turned to enmity. And indeed Hutten deserves credit for his loyalty: savage as was his accusation of duplicity and falsehood, he never did reveal Erasmus's secret.

## 2. *Hutten and Erasmus: Accusation and Defence*

Is it possible that you (Erasmus), who a short while ago reproved the Roman pontiff together with us, who with your avenging pen denounced Rome as a sewer of crime and iniquity, who detested bulls and indulgences, who condemned ceremonies, who castigated the manners of the papal court, who execrated canon law and decretals, who — in short — most severely attacked all the hypocrisy of that institution, is it possible that you now perform an about-turn, and make common cause with the enemy party?<sup>17</sup>

This is one of the most dramatic counts of Hutten's accusation: Erasmus is guilty of a volte-face that has surprised, hurt and bewildered his former friend.<sup>18</sup> It is based on a comparison between the dialogue *Iulius exclusus* and a letter sent by Erasmus to Marcus Laurinus on 1 February 1523. This letter — a miniature treatise in epistolary form — was immediately set into print, because Erasmus had an urgent need to make public the position he had decided to assume regarding the Reformers.<sup>19</sup> In point of fact, this statement of his belief was neither the first nor the only one he made, though in this case the great humanist was particularly

<sup>17</sup> 'Defixit me ibi admiratio quaedam ad stuporem usque coepique fremens moerensque agitare mecum, quid tandem esse possit, cur tu, qui Romanum pontificem nuper in ordinem redigebas nobiscum, ipsam Romam scelerum et improbitatis sentinam vindice calamo increpabas, bullas et indulgentias detestabaris, caerimonias damnabas, curtisanicam exigebas, ius canonicum et pontificum scita execrabaris, in summa, universam illius status hypocrisim severissime profligabas, is nunc recto actus contraria sequare et cum hostili parte societatem inear.' Ulrich von Hutten, *Expostulatio*, ed. by Böcking, pp. 186–87.

<sup>18</sup> See, n. 17 above.

<sup>19</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1342.

explicit: he distanced himself from Luther, condemned Luther's 'ferocity' and 'insults', raised the possibility that he might write against Luther, and repeated his protestations of loyalty to Rome, most particularly to the Roman pontiff: 'For who would not sustain the dignity of him who in his evangelical virtues represents Christ to us?'<sup>20</sup> Placed side by side with the text of *Iulius exclusus*, this letter justified the accusation of a volte-face. Loyalty to Erasmus and probably a promise of secrecy hindered Hutten from making an explicit reference to *Iulius exclusus*. But the implicit reference is unmistakable: it was in the dialogue against Pope Julius that the 'avenging pen' of Erasmus had declared implacable war against the papacy as an institution. The bulls,<sup>21</sup> the papal courtiers,<sup>22</sup> the theory of the Power of the Keys as elaborated by canon law,<sup>23</sup> the decretals,<sup>24</sup> Rome as a sewer of iniquity:<sup>25</sup> this was the vocabulary of the anti-Julius dialogue that had circulated round Europe for years. Hutten's accusation condensed into a few lines a series of references to *Iulius exclusus* that any well informed contemporary reader would have been able to recognize.

It is my contention that Erasmus responded to Hutten's accusation with a self-defence that amounted to an admission of responsibility. This self-defence, in my view, is to be sought in the most surprising and richly evocative pages of the *Spongia*.

'At dinner or when conversing with friends, I make jokes and utter whatever jests come into my mind, often with more licence than is appropriate [...] It is my greatest vice'. It was amidst this freedom, amidst these not always innocuous jests, that his friendship with Hutten blossomed, Erasmus informs us. And he recalls their past conversations: during the literary war that Hutten had waged against the inquisitor Jacob van Hoogstraten (in defence of Reuchlin), for example, Erasmus used to ask him 'when he was going to string up Hoogstraten on the gallows', and Hutten would reply laughing that he 'would do so as soon as possible'. This was a joke, perhaps one in poor taste: but everyone knew that it was not meant seriously.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 'Alicubi scripsi pios omnes vbique fauere dignitati Pontificis. Quis autem non faueat eius dignitati qui virtutibus Euangelicis Christum nobis repraesentet?' Allen v, Ep. 1342. 891–93.

<sup>21</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 108–12.

<sup>22</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 60 (*adulatores*), 1101 (*adulatores*), 996 (*satellitium*), 1011 (*satellitium*).

<sup>23</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 3–6, 27, 436–37.

<sup>24</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 679, 684.

<sup>25</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 992–1003.

<sup>26</sup> Erasmus, *Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 138, ll. 419–22.



What have these recollections to do with the theme of the second part of the *Spongia* — the sincerity or insincerity of Erasmus in the Lutheran controversy? They appear to be deviations from the theme. And yet Erasmus insists emphatically on these memories, dwelling at length on the scurrilous flights of imagination indulged in by him and his friends when gathered together at table:

I like this freedom at mealtimes and in conversation among friends, and I confess that I sometimes abuse it [...] How often during our dinners have we awarded the imperial crown to Pope Julius and the papal tiara to Emperor Maximilian! We have married off entire convents of friars to entire convents of nuns, and from their progeny we have recruited an army to send against the Turk, or settlers to colonize islands in the New World. We have turned the whole world upside down.

But these, he affirms, were jests *inter pocula*: private jokes among friends warmed with wine, ephemeral witticisms that left no trace either on paper or in the memory.<sup>27</sup>

I interpret this extraordinary passage as a confession: Erasmus admits that he was the inventor, and therefore the author, of *Iulius exclusus e coelis*. He admits it indirectly,<sup>28</sup> but unmistakably: the pope who — in the *Iulius exclusus* — is refused entrance into heaven by St Peter is the product of the same satirical imagination that awarded the tiara to Maximilian of Habsburg, the imperial crown to Pope Julius, and that sent against the Ottoman empire an army of friars' and nuns' children.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, this confession is also meant to be a self-defence: while acknowledging his responsibility, Erasmus invokes mitigating circumstances. The first of these is the collegiality of the offence: he had not invented that joke against the pope on his own; rather, it was the product of those

<sup>27</sup> 'Mihi placet haec libertas in conuiuiis et familiaribus colloquiis, qua saepe vtor immodice [...] Quoties in conuiuiis imperium transtulimus in Iulium pontificem et summum pontificium in Maximilianum Caesarem! Deinde collegia monachorum matrimonio copulauius collegiis monacharum. Mox descripsimus ex illis exercitum adversus Turcas, deinde colonias ex iisdem in nouas insulas. Breuiter vniuersum orbis statum vertebamus. Sed haec senatusconsulta non inscribebantur aureis tabulis sed vino, sic vt sublatis poculis nemo meminisset quid a quo dictum esset'. *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 172, ll. 139–40, 145–51.

<sup>28</sup> Erasmus could not avoid responding directly to the *Expostulatio* regarding his treatment of the institution of the papacy (see above, n. 17), but his response was weak and evasive: 'Vbi vero execratus sum ius canonicum et pontificum scita? Quid autem sit pontificem in ordinem redigere, non satis intelligo'. *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 173, ll. 183–85.

<sup>29</sup> This page of the *Spongia* has been linked to the dialogue *Iulius* by IJsewijn, 'I rapporti tra Erasmo', p. 123. IJsewijn argues in this essay that 'the *Iulius exclusus*, in its ferocious hostility against the pope, does not correspond in the least to the Erasmian spirit' — a debatable contention.



witty and convivial dinners that were the delight of the humanists (and we can easily imagine that Thomas More was one of the party).<sup>30</sup> The second mitigating circumstance is the wine that warmed the dinner-guests, gave wings to their imaginations, and loosened their tongues. The third is the bond of loyalty and of reciprocal complicity that linked the dinner-guests together, and ensured that any irreverent jesting remained a private secret, never to be divulged outside the group. Hutten knew that this was true: until he himself broke the secrecy, the dialogue had circulated only among a few intimate friends of the author.<sup>31</sup>

The vocabulary of contrition that Erasmus employs here attests that his *mea culpa* was sincere. To say *mea culpa* was not at all easy for this genius who was so well aware of his own brilliance. But in these pages he admits that 'this [taste for scurrilous jokes] is my greatest vice, one so innate in me that I have difficulty in overcoming it', and he acknowledges that he is guilty of 'immoderate freedom' of speech.<sup>32</sup> He was aware that his claim reducing the *Iulius exclusus* to a bibulous jest had its weak side: he had not only invented the joke, but he had also written it down. There existed indeed a codex of the *Iulius exclusus* in his own hand — a holograph manuscript. That holograph, deposited in England in the keeping of his amanuensis Thomas Lupset,<sup>33</sup> was the archetype from which derived the copies of *Iulius exclusus* that circulated amongst Erasmus's very closest friends. Eventually, one of these copies fell into the hands of a printer.<sup>34</sup>

Erasmus's confession, or self defence, in these pages assumes in the end an almost imploring tone: if the dialogue against Julius had been nothing but a joke, intended to arouse the private hilarity of a small group of friends, how could Hutten commit the enormity of making use of confidential information in order to disgrace a (former) friend, the great European master, before the whole of Europe?<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Allen II, Ep. 502, Thomas More to Erasmus, 15 December 1516.

<sup>31</sup> The brothers Bruno and Boniface Amerbach and the scholar Beatus Rhenanus were certainly among these friends.

<sup>32</sup> 'Hoc mihi vitium est praecipuum, sic insitum vt aegre possim vincere.' Erasmus, *Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 172, ll. 141–42.

<sup>33</sup> Allen II, Ep. 502. 9–14, Thomas More to Erasmus, 15 December 1516 (see below, n. 57).

<sup>34</sup> At the time Erasmus wrote this passage, he feared Hutten's counter-reply and wished to prevent his former friend from revealing any of his secrets; he could not have foreseen that Hutten would be dead before being able to respond.

<sup>35</sup> 'Maioris etiam inciuilitatis est, criminationem struere ex his quae amici freti fide nostra libere nobiscum nugantur per literas.' Erasmus, *Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 172, ll. 152–53. There follows the passage on friends who become enemies that I have cited above, n. 15.

Thus, in the same pages of the *Spongia*, confession and self-defence are interwoven in a discourse that is at the same time pellucid (for the addressee, Hutten) and impenetrable (for everyone else): one of the great masters of the written word produces here a small masterpiece of impassioned yet encoded prose.

The premature death of Hutten freed Erasmus from the incubus of being exposed in the eyes of Europe as the true author of the scurrilous dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis*.

### 3. Hutten, Jakob Schmidt and the First Edition of 'Iulius exclusus'

The dialogue *Iulius exclusus* found its way into print on the initiative of Ulrich von Hutten.

The thesis that Hutten was the promoter of the first edition of the controversial dialogue was authoritatively proposed by Nicolaas van der Blom (1975),<sup>36</sup> Josef Benzing (1975),<sup>37</sup> and Frank Hieronymus (1979).<sup>38</sup> Of particular weight is the opinion of Josef Benzing, the great expert on Rhenish and German printing in the decades that here concern us. Benzing has identified the printer who had a decisive role — *the* decisive role — in the distribution of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis*: Jakob Schmidt of Speyer.<sup>39</sup>

In 1517 Jakob Schmidt was Hutten's trusted printer: it was he who published in that year the second volume of the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*.<sup>40</sup> Now, the first edition of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus* came out in Speyer, printed by Jakob Schmidt. The authority of Benzing makes this attribution secure. It was Hutten who supplied his trusted printer with the text of the dialogue, sending it to Speyer from Italy, where he was studying law; this reconstruction, proposed both by Benzing and by van der Blom, seems extremely plausible. Similarly plausible, in my view, is another of their theses: that it was Hutten who suggested to the printer in Speyer an expedient to throw off the scent those who inevitably would try to seek out the true author. As a great admirer of Erasmus, and even more so now that he had read the dialogue against Julius, Hutten did not wish to expose the true author of the dialogue to the dangers of ecclesiastical censure: it was necessary to divert suspicion. So in the edition printed by Jakob Schmidt,

<sup>36</sup> Van der Blom, 'Qui était l'imprimeur de Iulius exclusus', pp. 65–66.

<sup>37</sup> Van der Blom and Benzing, 'Wer war der Drucker'.

<sup>38</sup> Hieronymus, 'Huttenica'.

<sup>39</sup> See above, n. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Benzing, *Ulrich von Hutten und seine Drucker*, p. 243.

an 'F. A. F. poeta regius' appears on the frontispiece as the author of the dialogue 'on the death of Pope Julius'.<sup>41</sup> These initials would be recognized by the informed reader as standing for Fausto Andrelini of Forlì (*Faustus Andrelinus Foroliviensis*), who lived in Paris as court poet and who during the war between Julius II and Louis XII had composed poems in support of his sovereign.<sup>42</sup> The forger who had invented the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* must have been very pleased with this clever and plausible disguise.<sup>43</sup>

The arguments I have just outlined are the contribution that bibliography and the history of printing have applied to the identification of Hutten as the publisher of the libel against Pope Julius. But philology also has strong arguments leading to the same conclusion: collation of the editions and the textual tradition of the *Iulius exclusus* supply clues pointing in the same direction. Here I anticipate some of the findings of my preparatory work for the critical edition of the *Iulius exclusus e coelis*.

Between 1517 and 1520 (or 1521) Rhenish and Parisian printers published a good many editions of the 'witty' (*festivus*) and irreverent dialogue. I have collated twelve of them. They are all clandestine editions, without date or place of publication and with no publisher's name (with a single exception).<sup>44</sup> At first sight the plethora of editions creates a confused impression, with no apparent order in sight. But collation of the editions noticeably simplifies matters. They all belong to two families of codices: an older family (*terminus a quo*: February 1517)<sup>45</sup> and a more recent one (*terminus a quo*: 1518).<sup>46</sup>

All the editions belonging to the older family depend from the one issued by the printer Jakob Schmidt of Speyer (including two Parisian editions published by Gilles de Gourmont in 1518).<sup>47</sup> I shall call this family of editions the

<sup>41</sup> *F. A. F. Poete Regij libellus. de obitu Julij Pontificis Maximi*, 16 c. unnum., sign. a–d<sup>4</sup>, gothic type.

<sup>42</sup> His life in: Ghisalberti and others, eds, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, III (1961), pp. 138–41.

<sup>43</sup> The formula 'F. A. F. Poetae Regii' appears in only two semi-clandestine editions of the pamphlet: the one issued in Speyer and another that appeared not long thereafter.

<sup>44</sup> The exception is the edition published by Thierry Martens in September 1518. It exists in two variant forms, one of which has no typographical information.

<sup>45</sup> See below, n. 48.

<sup>46</sup> See Hieronymus, 'Notizen zur Autorfrage und Druckgeschichte', p. 159.

<sup>47</sup> See Moreau, *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes*, II: 1511–1520 (1977), p. 486, nr. 1870.

'Huttenic' family. The only dated edition among the twelve collated — the one by Thierry Martens of September 1518 — also descends from the same archetype. The Huttenic editions reproduce the text of Jakob Schmidt, sometimes emended, more often corrupted. But the expedient of attributing the authorship to Fausto Andrelini failed and was abandoned: the initials F. A. F. disappeared immediately from the frontispiece, because all readers of the time immediately recognized Erasmus's style and noticed that the ideas in the *Iulius exclusus* were very similar to those in the humanist's signed works (in particular, the celebrated adage *Sileni Alcibiadis*).<sup>48</sup>

The Huttenic editions have in common a series of textual variants that differentiate them markedly from the second family, which I shall call 'Basiliensis' (because the edition from which this family descends was printed in Basle). In this essay I am not concerned with the Basiliensis family, since it has no bearing on the thesis I wish to advance, i.e. Hutten's role in the publication of the *Iulius exclusus*. I shall use the printings of the Basiliensis family only as textual comparison with those of the Huttenic family.

My textual examination of the two families has brought to light a group of significant variants. The most important of these, for my purposes, are those that refer to two historical personages, both with links to Hutten: the emperor Maximilian, and the prince-bishop of Mainz, Albert of Brandenburg.

The emperor Maximilian appears in the printings of the Huttenic family in a more favourable light than he does in those of the Basiliensis. Whoever it was who gave Jakob Schmidt the archetype of the Huttenic family — in my opinion, Hutten himself — had made certain excisions from the manuscript: he had eliminated a disrespectful observation about the emperor's chronic shortage of funds (and the fact that this influenced his political decisions),<sup>49</sup> cut out a reference to Maximilian's inveterate hatred of the French and his inability to vent it,<sup>50</sup> cancelled an allusion to imperial military setbacks in northern Italy, particularly around Padua (occupied by Maximilian in 1509 and then re-conquered by the Venetians),<sup>51</sup> and so on. Unlike some other textual lacunae, which are evidently

<sup>48</sup> One important piece of evidence among many is the letter sent from Brussels by Guy Morillon to Erasmus on 18 February 1517, Allen II, Ep. 532. 21–27 (if this letter refers to a printing); Erasmus certainly does refer to a printing in his letter to Johann Caesarius from Antwerp, 16 August 1517, Allen III, Ep. 622. 1–30.

<sup>49</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 886–87.

<sup>50</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 888–89.

<sup>51</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 920–21.

errors of transcription (due to hastiness), these are deliberate omissions, dictated by respect for the emperor. For Hutten had both an ardent political devotion and a deep personal loyalty to Maximilian.

Another of Hutten's patrons, the prince-bishop Albert of Mainz — who in 1516 had promised to take Hutten into his service, and in 1517 did so — also benefited from a textual alteration. A polemical reference in the *Iulius* to the avidity with which cardinals accumulated abbacies and benefices, and how a single prelate would collect several bishoprics, was omitted from Jakob Schmidt's edition and is therefore lacking in all the editions of the Huttenic family.<sup>52</sup> The most extreme example of episcopal pluralism was indeed that of Albert of Mainz, whose acceptance in 1514 of a third bishopric — that of Mainz — scandalized all of Christendom and indirectly provoked Luther's attack on the doctrine of indulgences. The omission of this phrase from the Speyer edition should be interpreted as an act of respect towards the prince-bishop of Mainz.

The identification of Hutten as the mediator between the manuscript text of the *Iulius exclusus* and the printer who published it for the first time is therefore confirmed by the textual alterations that characterize this family of editions: the omissions that my collation of the editions has revealed are most plausibly to be explained by the devotion nurtured by the German knight Ulrich von Hutten for his emperor, and by the gratitude he felt towards a generous patron. Many clues that have emerged from my bibliographic and philological analysis of the *Iulius exclusus* converge to corroborate this finding.

But by what channels did the manuscript of the *Iulius exclusus* come into Hutten's possession? This part of my reconstruction is conjectural. The hypothesis that best accords with the data I have gathered is that Hutten read and hurriedly copied<sup>53</sup> the manuscript of *Iulius exclusus* in Rome in the first half of the year 1516. A tradition dating from 1856 states that Thomas Lupset, the *famulus* to whom Erasmus entrusted his manuscripts when he left England in the summer of 1516, spent several months in Rome between 1515 and 1516.<sup>54</sup> Ulrich von Hutten is known to have stayed in Rome from January to April 1516.

<sup>52</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 644–46.

<sup>53</sup> In the same way, Hutten copied out Lorenzo Valla's treatise on the falsity of the Donation of Constantine at Bologna in 1517: Grimm, *Ulrich von Hutten: Wille und Schicksal*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>54</sup> See the notes to Allen I, Ep. 270. 527–28. However, Thomas Lupset's biographer, John Archer Gee, is sceptical about the tradition of a journey to Rome by Lupset, as maintained by Allen. Gee observes that Lupset could not have accompanied the English ambassador Richard Pace to Rome, as the tradition recorded by Allen would have it, because Pace was ambassador to the Swiss Cantons between 1515 and 1517: Gee, *The Life and Works of Thomas Lupset*, p. 52,

In Rome all the transalpine literati frequented the villa of the Luxembourgian prelate Johann Goritz (Corycius) near the Forum of Trajan, the resort of all the city's learned men.<sup>55</sup> If Thomas Lupset was in Rome, a meeting between him and Hutten — between the secretary of Erasmus and the disciple of Erasmus — was inevitable. In my view, the youthful vanity and self-importance of Lupset collided with the impassioned curiosity and impetuosity of Hutten. The result was that Hutten was permitted to copy out, hurriedly, the secret text that had been entrusted to Lupset.

In support of this theory one might adduce two clues. The first is the more important. At the end of June Thomas Lupset sent Erasmus a contrite letter from London, in which he expressed his regret and begged forgiveness from his former master and patron for a sin that he acknowledged having committed. The letter indicates that at that time Erasmus was extremely angry with Lupset: this anger had to do with something, some possession of Erasmus's, that Lupset had 'subtracted' or 'carried off' (*abstuli*), and had made use of without its owner's knowledge. I have said above that Lupset had been entrusted with a number of Erasmus's works in manuscript. The 'something' that he had 'carried off' was of such a delicate and compromising nature that Lupset dared not entrust this object to the usual courier, a certain Petrus, through whom he was accustomed to communicate with Erasmus, and thought it more prudent to hold on to the object until it could be consigned into safer hands: those of Erasmus himself.<sup>56</sup> As it turned out, the safe hands into which Lupset placed the compromising object were those of Thomas More: it was to More that Lupset in December 1516 handed over, together with other manuscripts of Erasmus, the autograph of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis*.<sup>57</sup>

n. 1. But the fact that Pace was not in Rome in the years 1515–16 does not necessarily mean that the tradition about Lupset's Roman sojourn is false. Indeed, a voyage to Rome would explain the total absence of news about Lupset that Gee himself notes for the period from 1514 to June 1516.

<sup>55</sup> *Coryciana*, ed. by IJsewijn, pp. 3–9. For Goritz see Ghisalberti and others, eds, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, LVIII (2002), pp. 69–72. For the relations between Hutten and Goritz see Grimm, *Ulrich von Hutten: Wille und Schicksal*, p. 63.

<sup>56</sup> Allen II, Ep. 431. 7–11, London, 28 June 1516: 'Malicia profecto nihil, incogitantia vero plurimum in te peccavi. Fateor et poenitet supplexque peto veniam; patiar me quovis supplicio damnari. Tradidissem Petro quae ex tuis abstuli, si non putassem tutius in tuum ad nos adventum servare; tibi igitur reverso reddam integra et, crede, intacta.'

<sup>57</sup> Allen II, Ep. 502. 9–14, Thomas More to Erasmus, London, 15 Dec. 1516: 'Lupsetus restituit mihi aliquot quaterniones tuas quas olim apud se tenuerat. In his est Iulii Genius, et declamationes duae [...] tua manu omnia, sed prima tantum scriptio, neque quicquam

The second clue comes from Rome. Indirect evidence supports the view that the text of the *Iulius exclusus* was present in the papal city between late 1516 and early 1517. A humanist well established in Roman circles, Andrea Guarna of Salerno, composed a satirical dialogue against Bramante, the architect who at that time was working on New St Peter's. Guarna's dialogue, *Simia*, is regarded as an imitation of the *Iulius exclusus*, the general plan of which it follows.<sup>58</sup> Although it was evidently conceived and composed in Rome, the dialogue was published in Milan, by the Milanese printer Gottardo da Ponte, on 23 June 1517; the author must have had his model to hand in the early months of that year. So the question is: was it through a manuscript that Andrea Guarna obtained his direct or indirect knowledge of the *Iulius exclusus*?

#### 4. Pope Julius II and Hutten

Hutten discovered Pope Julius in 1517/18. It was rather a late discovery: Julius II had been dead for four or five years (1513). Together with Julius, and through Julius, Hutten discovered his anti-Roman vocation. What I should like to demonstrate here is that the dialogue *Iulius exclusus* was the spur for both these discoveries. The revelation of the true face of the papacy passed, for Hutten, through the mediation of Erasmus and reached its full maturity in the years when Erasmus, for his part, decided to remain loyal to the Church of Rome.

Julius II began to acquire weight and consistency in Hutten's writings from 1518. There is earlier evidence of the German knight's hostility towards the papal curia and towards the city of Rome in general, but such hostility is moderate in tone. In these earlier writings Hutten champions the theory that subordinated the papacy to the empire, and professes an ardent German nationalism, but he does not attack the Roman Church, indeed he proclaims the medieval notion of the unity between the secular sphere and the spiritual: empire and Church are the two irreducible components of the *respublica christiana*.<sup>59</sup> The eight epigrams on the state of Rome (*de statu Romae*), which Hutten wrote in 1516 and sent to a friend from the eternal city so that they could be published in Germany, lament the disappearance of the ancient Roman virtues, the degeneration of the inhabit-

satis integrum. Extra haec sancte negat tui quicquam apud se esse quod tu desyderas'. See the introduction to this letter in Allen II, pp. 418–20.

<sup>58</sup> Guarna, *Simia*. There is a life of Andrea Guarna in Ghisalberti and others, eds, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, LX (2003), pp. 392–96 (here p. 394).

<sup>59</sup> Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten*, pp. 64–77.



ants, the simony that permeated ecclesiastical administration. Nothing however, in the original version of these epigrams, presages the impassioned anti-Roman campaign of later years.<sup>60</sup>

The doctrinal argumentation intended to delegitimize the papacy as an institution is found in two works by, or attributed to, Hutten: the dialogue *Vadiscus sive Trias Romana* (1518/20) and the *Oratio ad Christum pro Iulio II* (1520). In both of these works, the papacy against which the German knight launches his attack is embodied by Pope Julius II: the Julius of Erasmus.

The principal document of this intransigent aversion, the dialogue *Vadiscus sive Trias Romana*, was in the course of composition in 1518. In 1520, when it reached the press, its readers found themselves confronted with a language of unprecedented ferocity.<sup>61</sup> This ferocity was fed by a series of data evidently derived from the *Iulius exclusus e coelis*. Not that Hutten had before his eyes, while he was writing, a physical copy of the libellous dialogue: but he had so many recollections of it in his mind, as to suggest that he knew it by heart. It was the military history of Julius's pontificate that supplied Hutten with the most efficacious arguments for his diatribe: the wars waged by Rome, the involvement of the principal European states in those wars, the blood poured out, the thousands of dead, the devastated cities have in Hutten's dialogue a similar weight as they had for Erasmus.<sup>62</sup> But Hutten undermines the moral authority and religious credibility of Pope Julius in particular by invoking certain specific documents of his ecclesiastical policies, known to him through the dialogue *Iulius exclusus*: the bull by which Julius imparted a plenary indulgence and guaranteed entry into Paradise to all soldiers who fought in his war against the king of France;<sup>63</sup> the political use he made of the faculty — recognized to him by canon law — of absolving whomsoever he wished from the obligations of an oath;<sup>64</sup> the excommunication threatened against anyone who promoted or supported the convocation of a council (a reflection of the terror inspired in him by the 'conciliabulum' of Pisa in 1511).<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Grimm, *Ulrich von Hutten: Wille und Schicksal*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking. For the date of composition, see: Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten*, p. 103.

<sup>62</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, pp. 172–73, 183.

<sup>63</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, pp. 237–38 (cf. Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 252–61)

<sup>64</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, pp. 223–24 (cf. Erasmus, *Dialogus, Iulius exclusus e coelis*, ed. by Ferguson, ll. 421–22)

<sup>65</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, pp. 179, 216.



And the pomp flaunted by the prelates of the curia, and the pride manifested in papal ritual? Here too Hutten borrowed his examples from Erasmus, dressing them in the same terms: in the *Vadiscus* we meet again the prelates' mules shod with gold and caparisoned in purple,<sup>66</sup> the pope's triple tiara that makes Diocletian's diadem pale in comparison,<sup>67</sup> the foot-kissing ceremony by which the pope humiliates the princes of the earth,<sup>68</sup> and the gift of the Golden Rose by which he flatters them.<sup>69</sup>

The most effective rhetorical lesson that Hutten learned from the *Iulius exclusus* was however the juxtaposition of Christ and Julius, the evangelical pastor and the ambitious despot. Hutten had deployed this contrast in the *Vadiscus*.<sup>70</sup> But it is in the *Oratio ad Christum pro Iulio II* that the theme is developed to its fullest extent. The *Oratio ad Christum* is an anonymous folio pamphlet, printed by Andreas Cratander at Basle in the autumn of 1520.<sup>71</sup> Frank Hieronymus has ascribed it to Hutten. I consider this attribution totally convincing, both because of the textual similarities with Hutten's signed works, which Hieronymus accurately records, and because of the theme and argumentation that link this prayer to the dialogue *Vadiscus sive Trias romana*.<sup>72</sup>

The *Oratio ad Christum pro Iulio II* develops the theme of the contrast between the two models — evangelical pastor and ambitious despot — over ten pages. It was Erasmus who had imparted this lesson in rhetoric to Europe with the adage *Sileni Alcibiadis*. In the *Iulius exclusus* he developed the lesson, but changed its register: the register of the adage is paraenetic, supplicatory, ardent; the register of the *Iulius exclusus* is ironic, satirical, sarcastic — predominantly 'facetious', in the sense of arousing laughter in the listener or reader. In the *Oratio ad Christum* the anonymous author — Hutten, in my opinion — blended the two compositions by Erasmus to produce a fervent peroration, vibrant with pathos. What is completely lacking, as being utterly extraneous to Hutten, is the 'facetious' or comical register of the *Iulius exclusus*: there is nothing at all facetious in this supplication to Christ that He cancel events that have already taken place, that He

<sup>66</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, p. 182.

<sup>67</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, p. 183.

<sup>68</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, p. 225.

<sup>69</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, p. 245.

<sup>70</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Vadiscus*, ed. by Böcking, esp. pp. 172–73.

<sup>71</sup> *Oratio ad Christum*, s.l.a. et s.n.t.

<sup>72</sup> See Hieronymus, 'Huttenica'.

alter a history already written into the annals. The rhetorical borrowings from the dialogue *Iulius exclusus* are very many.

Domine Iesu Christe, qui vere summus es pontifex [...] procul avertat tua misericordia [...] ut tuus vicarius omnia bello, sanguine, caede permisceat; ut qui tuo exemplo pacis omine salutat populum, ipse fax sit belli; et cuius erat Christianos principes bella forte molientes auctoritate sua compescere, is modis omnibus conetur, universos Christiani nominis principes, ad periculosissimum bellum, non excitare modo, verum etiam cogere.<sup>73</sup>

The feature shared by the two compositions here briefly described, the dialogue *Vadiscus* and the *Oratio ad Christum pro Iulio II*, is their retrospective character. Hutten, a front-line combatant in the religious and political conflict that was racking Europe, chose as the object of his attack Julius II, an entirely unreal target, because his notion of the papacy, his anti-Roman ideology, and his very action took form and definition from the effect of the emotions aroused in him by his reading of, his absorption in, his long familiarity (as copyist and editor) with the dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis*.

### Conclusion

There was a 'virtual' debate between Erasmus and Pope Julius II, concerning the identity of the Christian Church. This debate has come to us through the dialogue *Iulius exclusus*. The history of the text and its publication, partially reconstructed in this essay, reveals that the debate had a third interlocutor: the dialogue between Julius and Erasmus was in reality a colloquy of three voices. The third speaker, Ulrich von Hutten, played a fundamental part: through him, the dialogue between Erasmus and Julius became public. In passing from the circles reserved for communication among humanists to the sphere of public communication, the dialogue changed its tone and its weight: it became the basis for the juxtaposition of Christ and Christ's opposite — the Roman pontiff. Pope Julius became the very model of the Antichrist.

Certain intimate friends of Erasmus were apprised of the true authorship of the provocative dialogue. Erasmus, who had circulated it among them, confessed to another of his friends — Hutten, if the interpretation I have presented in this essay is persuasive — the circumstances in which the dialogue was written. But he did not publish the dialogue. I believe that he would never have published it on

<sup>73</sup> *Oratio ad Christum*, f. a4<sup>r</sup>.

his own initiative. *Rebus exulceratis*,<sup>74</sup> i.e. when the temperature of central Europe rose sharply — the scandal over indulgences, the rise of Luther — Erasmus sought to suppress the dialogue.<sup>75</sup> If it had been up to him, he would have suppressed it. He had conceived it as a convivial joke, he had written it in a climate of delightful humanist complicity. True, he had inserted into it a crucial message — his conception of the Christian Church — but he was well aware that his dialogue had factitious and partisan features. By its being printed, the joke had lost all its frivolity and fun: it had become a deadly serious manifesto in the war against Rome, in which Erasmus did not recognize himself.

The existence of a double circuit of humanist communication — an open circuit for messages that were respectful of the established powers, and a closed circuit for disrespectful ironies and corrosive attacks on the potentates and on the Church — is not in itself surprising. The messages that circulated in the closed circuit, however, are not always irrecoverable for us. Among the sources that permit us to reconstruct these messages in the closed circuit are the letters of Erasmus, which are very evidently characterized by different registers according to the position of the addressee. To the evidence of the correspondence I have proposed adding — as a source for investigating some of the messages in the closed circuit — that of the illustrations that accompanied the works of Erasmus printed in Basle.<sup>76</sup> The publishing history of the dialogue *Iulius exclusus e coelis* is the most obvious proof of the existence of this double circuit.

<sup>74</sup> I quote this phrase from *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 138, l. 415. I give the entire passage above, n. 15.

<sup>75</sup> Allen III, Ep. 622, Erasmus to Johannes Caesarius, Antwerp, 16 August 1517.

<sup>76</sup> I have advanced this theory in Seidel Menchi, 'Erasmus as Arminius'.

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## ERASMUS AS BIOGRAPHER OF THOMAS MORE AND HIS FAMILY

Clare M. Murphy†

### *The First Biography*

It is often said that the earliest biography of Thomas More is that of his son-in-law William Roper, composed about twenty years after More's death in 1535. Roper's *Life* was actually not written as a biography, but as a set of notes for that of Nicholas Harpsfield, finished in December 1557. The first biography was Erasmus's letter of 23 July 1519 to Ulrich von Hutten, from Antwerp (Allen IV, Ep. 999). According to the Toronto edition, Erasmus 'was eager to compose for the general public a description of More that could be published without delay in the *Farrago*'.<sup>1</sup> There is a question about whether or not the request that Erasmus claims to have received from Hutten was fabricated to give him a reason for writing the biography (p. 354, n. 1), but this is not to say that Hutten was not glad to have the letter, since in 1519 relations between the three were still quite amicable. The principal attraction of More for Hutten is his books, which Hutten has called 'as brilliant as they are scholarly' (5).

<sup>1</sup> *CWE 7: The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 993 to 1121, 1519 to 1520* (1987), 15–25. References to this edition will be given in the body of my text by line number. References by page rather than by line will be so indicated. For a full-length study of Ep. 999 (Allen IV, pp. 12–23) see Marc'hadour, *Thomas More vu par Érasme*. For a more recent detailed study, see Marc'hadour, 'Erasmus: First and Best Biographer'. Marc'hadour deals with the biographical letters mentioned in this article, particularly Ep. 999, pointing out aspects of More's life where Erasmus is the only source, and others where he is supported by later More biographers or by More's own writings (pp. 22–25).

Erasmus must begin, of course, with *sprezzatura*: were he only as skilful at painting a portrait of More as Hutten is eager to have one. What pleasure it would give him to spend some time, he says, 'thinking about the friend I love best' (21–23)! Next follows the catalogue of classical allusions as incumbent as *sprezzatura* upon the Prince of the Humanists. He begins with the physical portrait of the barely-past-forty friend: of medium height, harmoniously proportioned, with a warm rather than pale complexion. Erasmus gives his readers the choice of whether More has blackish-brown or brownish-black hair (that is, two equivalents for auburn). His eyes — in a manner which the English admire, although not the compatriots of the writer or receiver of the letter — are not dark but greyish-blue and flecked and of the sort which shows a happy nature (*ingenium felicissimum*). His expression indicates that he is a man who smiles easily and is inclined to be friendly and merry. Did Erasmus know that More would be attacked for being *too* merry? Or that Richard Pace had been criticized in 1517 for making him sheer mirth? He hastens to add that More is 'without a hint of the fool or the buffoon' (37–48). A reader sees here an attempt to emphasize More as a physical example of the golden mean. He is neither tall nor short, neither fair nor ruddy, cheerful but not clownish, with hair and eyes that must be described by compound colours rather than by one.

More has, since boyhood, taken no heed to his personal appearance (53). This detail is not much elaborated on, but is meant probably to prepare the reader for the later emphasis on More's intellectual and spiritual qualities — matters to which he obviously gave more attention. One interesting point is that Erasmus describes More as having a 'somewhat thin' (42) beard. The Toronto editors point out that More never grew a beard [until imprisoned], but that the Holbein portrait in the Frick Collection 'makes it evident that he did not shave every day' (p. 354, n. 7). A stubble beard must have been a well-known attribute of More: taking leave of his family on his way to the Tower of London in the Elizabethan play *Sir Thomas More*, he notes that his wife does not appreciate his kissing when his beard is stubble. But now, he says, she should welcome him because he has been given 'a smooth court shaving' (IV. 2, 57). All of this adds up to the description of a handsome man, delivered with the middle course a reader soon becomes used to. Instead of saying what More looked like when Erasmus first met him, Erasmus writes: 'How good-looking he was as a young man, one can guess even now by what remains' (55–56).

From appearance, Erasmus moves on to More's health, to his diet in both food and drink, to his voice and his clothing. In the latter, as in just about everything else, More prefers simplicity. 'He never wears silk or scarlet or a gold chain, except when it is not open to him to lay it aside' (80–81). The Utopians likewise have



only two garments, a linen one for warm weather and a woollen for cold. (This author has always found here a private joke on the part of More, who was an honorary member of the Mercers' Guild, and who had married a Mercer's widow.) This Utopian austerity did not extend to his children, however. In the epigram to his *dulcissimis liberis*, he reminds them: 'That is why [because of his loving heart] I used to dress you in silken garments'.<sup>2</sup> In the Holbein pen and ink drawing of the More family preserved in Basel, More's daughters, particularly Margaret, are sumptuously dressed.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

Clothing goes with ceremony, and Erasmus moves subtly into presenting the public man and the court of Henry VIII. Now comes his frequently quoted description of More as born for friendship (98). His gifts in that regard make him skilful in handling people and moving about in society. In the social arena, wit is a great asset, and More delights 'in witty sayings that betray a lively mind' (122–23), whence a return by Erasmus to the opening subject of the letter — More's writings (2–3). His attraction to wit led him as a young man to try his hand at epigrams and to be particularly interested in Lucian. 'In fact', confesses Erasmus, 'it was he (yes, he can make the camel dance) who persuaded me to write my *Moriae Encomium*' (123–25).

Erasmus tells his readers that 'there is nothing in human life to which he [More] cannot look for entertainment, even in most serious moments', whether it be 'educated and intelligent people' or the 'ignorant and stupid'. Nor does he object to professional buffoons (126–30). In his later household, More did have his fool, Henry Patenson, whom Holbein included in the pen and ink drawing of the family — in the same pose in which he would later paint Henry VIII arms akimbo in one of his portraits. This aspect of More leads to a serious conclusion: 'Nobody is less swayed by public opinion, and yet nobody is closer to the feelings of ordinary men' (134–36), a statement that Erasmus had already made in the dedication of the *Moria*. From persons, the letter moves on to birds and animals, and the reader learns that More has a menagerie of all kinds of birds and of what today we would call exotic pets: monkey, fox, ferret, weasel (139–40).

As Erasmus returns to what is becoming the leitmotif of the letter — More as humanist — the reader finds that the plot thickens: he deals with the disagreement between More and his father concerning the son's programme of studies.

<sup>2</sup> *CW*, III. 2: *Latin Poems*, ed. by Miller and others (1984), no. 264, pp. 278–81.

<sup>3</sup> See Martz, 'Thomas More: The Search for the Inner Man', esp. p. 401.

'As a young man he devoted himself to the study of Greek literature and [of] philosophy, with so little support from his father, a man in other respects of good sense and high character, that his efforts were deprived of all outside help and he was treated almost as if disinherited because he was thought to be deserting his father's profession; for his father is a specialist in English law' (149–55). Erasmus points out that even though 'law as a profession has little in common with literature truly so called [...], in England those who have made themselves authorities in that subject are in the first rank for eminence and distinction' (155–57). We do know that More spent two happy years at Oxford until his father called him back to London to pursue the study of law, the role of the father at that time being so strong that the adolescent had no choice. In fact, the first known date in More's life is that of his inscription in Lincoln's Inn, 12 February 1496. Erasmus then soothes himself and perhaps his readers by describing the benefits of the legal profession in England. It is the career most 'likely to lead to wealth and reputation [...]; in fact most of the nobility of the island owes its rank to studies of this kind', which entail many years of hard work. Though 'made for better things', More applied himself so assiduously to legal studies that 'there was no one whose advice was more freely sought by litigants, nor was a larger income made by any of those who gave their whole time to the law'. This felicitous state of affairs Erasmus attributes to 'the force and quickness of More's intelligence' (158–67).

And thus we arrive back at the literary pursuits of the humanist and More's active reading of the Church Fathers, which led to his giving public lectures before large audiences on St Augustine's *De civitate Dei*: 'priests and old men were not ashamed to seek instruction in holy things from a young man and a layman, or sorry they had done so' (168–72). There is no record of what More said in these lectures. Thomas Stapleton writes that they were literary and philosophical in nature,<sup>4</sup> bringing us back to Erasmus's statement that as a young man More devoted himself to the study of Greek literature and of philosophy. 'Holy things' leads Erasmus to tell his readers: 'and all the time he applied his whole mind to the pursuit of piety, with vigils and fasts and prayer and similar exercises preparing himself for the priesthood' (172–74). Erasmus finds this sort of trial run very wise, but he does not mention that More spent time in the London Charterhouse. Although Erasmus was never too fond of religious orders, he made an exception for the Carthusians. His colloquy *Militis et Cartusiani*, for example, features a Carthusian pacifist debating with a soldier.<sup>5</sup> This is the first mention in the letter of More's piety, an important subject to which Erasmus will return.

<sup>4</sup> Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. by Reynolds, pp. 7–8.

<sup>5</sup> See Margolin, 'Les Avatars de l'Érasmisme'.

More may have been well paid as a lawyer, but 'from any love of filthy lucre he is absolutely free' (216). Some of the details he gives of More's liberality, his providing legal services to those who could not pay, for example, are also mentioned by Stapleton.<sup>6</sup> Erasmus gives further legal examples, such as More's advising clients on how to proceed with the least expense to themselves, and his returning to litigants the money they were required to pay even before their cases came to court. As a result, 'his native city held him in deep affection' (222–33). Popular opinion as expressed in the play *Sir Thomas More* corroborates these biographers, when one woman calls to More on his way to the Tower 'farewell the best friend that the poor e'er had' (v. 2, 43).

This same play, in the manner of Elizabethan drama, presents one scene after another in chronological fashion, but not necessarily with the correct dating. Thus More is very quickly moved through the ranks to Lord Chancellor (an office he was given in 1529) after quelling the Evil May Day riots of 1517. Unlike the playwrights, Erasmus is not operating with poetic license, but he points out that More's great intelligence in performing the missions entrusted to him by the king had the result that 'his serene Majesty King Henry VIII would not rest until he had dragged the man to his court'. Erasmus recognizes that the word 'dragged' (*pertractus*) would raise eyebrows, and time has proven him correct. He therefore justifies his choice: no man was ever more consumed with ambition to enter a court than he was to avoid it. But since the king wished to have advisers who were 'learned, wise, intelligent, and upright men', he especially wanted More, and never gave him leave to go. In serious matters there was no better counsellor, and if the king wished to relax, there was no one more cheerful (234–45). Erasmus anticipates objections to More's being 'dragged' to court; what he did not anticipate was that in another sixteen years, the emperor Charles V would say of the king's execution of his longed-for courtier: 'we would rather have lost the best city of our dominions than such a wise counsellor'.<sup>7</sup>

Erasmus relates that More was such an authoritative and able judge that he could settle cases in a way that pleased both sides. Yet for all this, he never took a bribe. 'Happy indeed a commonwealth would be, if the prince would appoint to each post a magistrate like More. And all the time no pride had touched him' (248–50). The use of 'happy' and 'commonwealth' suggests that Erasmus is thinking of More's 'best state of a commonwealth', and indeed it is in *Utopia* that

<sup>6</sup> Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, ed. by Reynolds, p. 67, writes that More did not charge widows and orphans for his legal services.

<sup>7</sup> Roper, *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore*, ed. by Hitchcock, pp. 103–04; Harpsfield, *The Life of Sir Thomas Moore*, ed. by Hitchcock, pp. 205–06.

Hythloday (who insisted that *he* would never be dragged into court) reiterates that pride is the worst of all evils.

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This description of More at court leads into what is perhaps the most laudatory paragraph in the long epistle. *Utopia*, More tells us in his prefatory letter to Peter Giles, he wrote in the time he could salvage from eating and sleeping. Erasmus says: 'Amidst such masses of business he does not forget his old and ordinary friends, and returns to his beloved literature from time to time' (251–52). This is the leitmotif which inserts itself again, but here, almost irrelevantly, among the many ways in which More gives of his money or himself to all and sundry, but leading Erasmus to a full-blown discussion of More as *litteratus*, letting his readers know the basis of their friendship. 'But to return to tell of his literary pursuits, which have been the chief bond between More and myself in both directions (*me Moro mihiq[ue] Morum*)' (268–69): thus the Prince of the Humanists introduces what is to be a short history of More the writer thus far in his career — almost a throw-away line, coming after a catalogue of More's virtues. Yet it startles: what has united Erasmus to More and More to Erasmus? Literary pursuits.

The situation thus established, Erasmus produces a short literary biography. More began by writing poetry, and practised every sort of genre to perfect his style. What that style is now, he does not have to tell von Hutten, who has More's books always in his hands (this is the second time Erasmus has so mentioned). He takes delight in declamations and in paradoxical themes (the reader is reminded of Guillaume Budé's calling More 'my dear Oxymoron'), which exercise ingenuity. He wrote an answer to Lucian's *Tyrannicida*, asking Erasmus to be his opponent 'to test more accurately what progress he had made in this sort of composition' (269–79). Erasmus is of course talking about the collection from Lucian translated by the two friends in 1505–06. They each wrote a reply to the *Tyrannicida* (p. 355, n. 18). *Utopia* More wrote 'with the purpose of showing the reasons for the shortcomings of a commonwealth, but he represented the English commonwealth in particular', since he knew it best. Book Two he wrote first — at leisure — and later Book One — in haste — hence a certain unevenness in the style (279–84). *Inaequalitas* is not necessarily pejorative; as for *sermo* and *dialoge*, each has its own decorum. As one would expect, Erasmus mentions only Latin works.

From writing Erasmus moves to oratory, pointing out that More is skilful at all forms of speaking, including disputation, and again giving credit to More's intelligence and memory (285–92). Only once previously has Erasmus mentioned the subject which follows: 'True piety finds him a practising follower, though far removed from all superstition'. More has fixed hours for prayer, which is from

the heart (296–98). The next point Erasmus makes may help explain why More's works frequently have open endings. In *Opera aperta*, Umberto Eco cites this phenomenon in a host of religious writers from St Paul on, who leave their gaze open to the world to come.<sup>8</sup> Erasmus says of More: 'When he talks with friends about the life after death, you recognize that he is speaking from conviction, and not without good hope'. Erasmus takes leave of his subject by noting that More is like this even at court (298–300), and ends as he had begun, with *sprezzatura*: 'There is the portrait, the best (*optimum*) of sitters ill done by the worst (*non optime*) of artists' (324). The Toronto translation here fails to preserve the repetition and litotes of Erasmus's original, which reads 'the best of sitters ill done by not-the-best of artists'.

### *Later Biographical Letters*

The element of *belles lettres* is evident in the letter of Erasmus addressed to Germain de Brie (or Germanus Brixius) from Antwerp on 25 June 1520 (Allen IV, Ep. 1117).<sup>9</sup> The literary quarrel between More and de Brie over the sea battle between English and French ships had escalated to the publication by de Brie of *Antimorus*.<sup>10</sup> Erasmus tells de Brie that some readers find him 'deficient in the common courtesy that ought to go with liberal studies', and he wishes the quarrel made up, not for the sake of More's reputation — which such an unfortunate pamphlet could not harm — nor any distrust of More's powers if the quarrel should come to open conflict, but because the 'devotees of good literature' should agree among themselves, and the Graces should keep company with the Muses, 'especially since there is such a rancorous conspiracy everywhere against men of our way of thinking' (49–57). Two concepts stand out here: 1) Erasmus thought that *studia humanitatis* should make its students more humane, and 2) the humanities have always had to struggle for survival, even in the age that is credited with bringing them to the forefront of human consciousness.

Erasmus also tells de Brie that it would be better for the reputation of France if he and More could be reconciled, because France 'by common consent has never

<sup>8</sup> Eco, *Opera aperta*; Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. by Cancogni, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *CWE* 7, 318–22. References to this letter will be given by line number in the body of my text.

<sup>10</sup> For the background of the More-de Brie quarrel, see Appendix A by Stephen Merriam Foley and Appendices B and C by Daniel Kinney in *CW*, III. 2. See also *Érasme de Rotterdam et Thomas More: Correspondance*, ed. by Marc'hadour, pp. 109–10; and Gilman, 'Teaching the Truth'.

produced anything with so much rancour in it' as his pamphlet against More' (60–63). Even de Brie's French friends agree that More has behaved much more courteously in the debate (64–66). Though Erasmus states that he is neutral and just wants to see his two friends reconciled, it is not unclear that he sides with More. The quarrel had been over the role of fiction in historiography, and over matters of Latin style. Erasmus claims to have no opinion about which man is the better scholar — although he knows what other people think (91–95). He has not read much written by de Brie, but a number of writings of More, with whom he is an intimate friend, and who is incomparably gifted, has a fertile memory, and ready self-expression (*dicendi facultas*). He was imbued with Latin literature from childhood, and studied Greek under the learned Linacre and Grocyn. In sacred studies he has advanced to the point of not being looked down upon even by great theologians. He has not been unsuccessful (*non infelicitur*) in his study of 'the liberal disciplines', is above average in philosophy, and yields almost to no one in his knowledge of English law. More's prudence is so exceptional that the king did not rest until he had made him part of his most important decisions, *consilia* (96–108). What Erasmus will continue to persuade More to do is to 'refrain from a more unpleasant attack on' de Brie (129). The latter had already assailed More twice in succession — in his pamphlet *Antimorus* and in the preface to *Poemata duo*, published in Paris just a few weeks before the letter Erasmus is writing. He tells de Brie 'many people take it ill' that he attacked More a second time when More had not answered *Antimorus* (123–24). As biography, the letter's principal force is its presentation of More's intellectual and rhetorical prowess, against which it would be unwise for de Brie to struggle.

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Many years have passed as we come to Erasmus's final letter of More biography, that written toward the end of 1532 from Freiburg-im-Breisgau to Joannes Faber, the humanist bishop of Vienna and long-time friend of the *Rotterdamois* (Allen x, Ep. 2750).<sup>11</sup> With it Erasmus enclosed a copy of More's letter to him of 14 June 1532 (Allen x, Ep. 2659), 'which had been delayed some months before delivery' (Allen x, p. 135). The extant autograph of the letter is a rough draft. More no longer holds his illustrious position and his name has been tarnished, a victim of calumny. Erasmus seems uncertain of events in London, and still clings to the idea of an honest if all too human king. He has not had any recent news

<sup>11</sup> Erasmus, *Correspondance*, ed. by Gerlo, x: 1532–1534, ed. by Marie Delcourt and others (1981), pp. 177–82. References to this letter will be given by line number in the body of my text.



from More (11–16) or from England, and his frustration shows. In May 1532 More had resigned the chancellorship, no longer able to support the king, whom on 15 May the bishops had acknowledged as Head of the Church in England. But Erasmus is apparently unaware of what actually happened, and as he tells the story, More asked the king to relieve him of his office, and the king — always attached to his friend — did him the favour of freeing him to devote himself to liberal studies and to his family (33–35). Erasmus reiterates to Faber the virtues of More he had related to Hutten and to de Brie, but in a much lower key: his love of *belles lettres*, his intelligence, his piety, his devotion to his family.

He also takes some time defending the attitude toward heresy of More — as magistrate and loyal implementer of the law. Erasmus here sees heresy as a form of sedition with the potential of destroying the state (136–41).<sup>12</sup> Without mentioning any names or places, he seems at one point to be referring to the persecution of Catholics in Reformed lands. In England, Erasmus speaks of the ‘pseudo-evangelizers’ (159). With his predilection for litotes, he points out that while there is no pious man who does not wish for reform in Church practices, no wise man wishes for general subversion (177–79). On 21 March of the following year, 1533, Erasmus wrote about twenty lines to Jan Lasky on the stepping down of More, summarizing what he had said to Faber.<sup>13</sup> The father of Anne Boleyn had asked Erasmus to compose a work on preparing for death. *De praeparatione ad mortem* was published by Froben at the beginning of 1534, with a brief preface by Erasmus to Thomas Boleyn (Allen x, Ep. 2884). An appendix longer than the work itself carries twelve letters, including two by More and this letter to Faber.<sup>14</sup>

### *More's Family as Viewed by Erasmus*

*Joan More and Alice More:* Erasmus had described More's two wives to Hutten, without naming either one. The first, Jane, or more probably Joan, Colt was a young country bride just ripe to be moulded by her husband,<sup>15</sup> who educated her and taught her music. Erasmus says that she bore several children of whom four

<sup>12</sup> In his *Life of Jerome* (1516), Erasmus had written that in the matter of heresy, tolerance is impiety, not virtue (*Deinde haereseos ea est insimulatio, in qua tolerantem esse impietas sit, non virtus*). Ferguson, p. 165, ll. 868–70.

<sup>13</sup> Allen x, Ep. 2780, 20–44: see *Érasme de Rotterdam et Thomas More: Correspondance*, ed. by Marc'hadour, p. 241.

<sup>14</sup> *Érasme de Rotterdam et Thomas More: Correspondance*, ed. by Marc'hadour, p. 249.

<sup>15</sup> Marc'hadour, ‘More's First Wife... Jane? or Joan?’

survive. He names the three daughters and one son, but calls Elizabeth (the second daughter) 'Alice', the name of More's second wife, whom he married within a month of the death of Joan. She was 'neither beautiful nor in her first youth', and Erasmus thus concludes that More married her to have someone to look after his household. More did joke about her in quoting Martial, *nec bella nec puella*. Lady Alice More as depicted by Holbein, however, is a handsome woman (see note 3). Erasmus does write that she is 'a capable and watchful housewife', whom her husband has persuaded to obedience not by giving orders but by kindness and merry humour. As he had with Joan, her husband had her instructed in music; she played the zither, the lute, the monochord, and the recorder (*CWE* 7, 180–200). As part of his discussion of the significance of friendship to both humanists, Marc'hadour suggests 'that More's determination to educate his wives stemmed from a desire to give them a full share in his life and pursuits: he wanted them his friends, not merely his bedfellows, able not only to feed his learned visitors, but to enjoy their conversation'.<sup>16</sup> Marc'hadour also notes that in the 1518 preface to the new edition of his *Enchiridion*, Erasmus makes an apparent allusion to More: '[a]mong those who have married twice there are some whom Christ thinks worthy of the first circle'.<sup>17</sup>

\* \* \*

In his colloquy 'Marriage' (*Coniugium*), first printed in August 1523, Erasmus constructs a discussion of marriage between Eulalia and her friend Xanthippe, in which Eulalia relates several stories of husbands to Xanthippe.<sup>18</sup> The first story is often seen as a depiction of how More won over his distressed and difficult young bride Joan to more seemly behaviour. For Craig Thompson, in fact, there is no doubt. 'The patient husband was Thomas More. He is not named here, but the story fits the facts as intimated by Erasmus' in the letter to Hutten (p. 324, n. 31). Eulalia's tale of (possibly) More, Joan, and Joan's father (p. 314, l. 24–p. 315, l. 36) leads Xanthippe to conclude: 'husbands like that are as scarce as white crows'. The one-to-one identification posited by Thompson carries as many discrepancies as

<sup>16</sup> Marc'hadour, 'Erasmus: First and Best Biographer', p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Allen III, Ep. 858, 333–34; *CWE* 6, 83, ll. 356–57 / *CWE* 66, 16, with n. 44. See Marc'hadour, 'Erasmus: First and Best Biographer', p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> *Coniugium*, in Erasmus, *Colloquies*, trans. by Thompson, pp. 306–27. References to this colloquy will be given in the body of my text by page number for introduction and notes, and by page and line number for the colloquies themselves, where line numbering begins anew with each page.



similarities, however, including the emphasis on the young wife's father. In a well-documented article, Retha Warnicke suggests that the couple may be Erasmus's student and patron Sir William Blount, fourth Baron Mountjoy, and his first wife, Elizabeth Say.<sup>19</sup> For the final word on More's wives it is probably wisest to consult the English humanist himself. The last extant piece of correspondence between More and Erasmus was written from Chelsea in June 1533 (Allen x, Ep. 2831), a long letter to which More appended the epitaph he had composed for himself. In it he says that of his two wives, he does not know which is dearer to him, she of the past or she of the present. He prays therefore that the three of them, after sharing a tomb, can be united in heaven.

### *Margaret More*

In her chapter on Margaret More Roper in *Redeeming Eve*, Elaine Beilin writes:

All contemporary information about her comes from her admiring and perhaps self-congratulatory father and from the original More hagiographers, William Roper [1556], Richard Hyrde [1525], Nicholas Harpsfield [1557], and Thomas Stapleton [1588].<sup>20</sup>

This assessment exemplifies the serious inaccuracies that arise from looking at More from an English viewpoint only. Margaret was introduced to the Republic of Letters in September 1521 — by Erasmus of Rotterdam writing from Anderlecht to Guillaume Budé in Paris (Allen iv, Ep. 1233).<sup>21</sup>

Margaret, now sixteen, had been married that summer to William Roper, whom Erasmus had never met. Besides being an early presentation of Margaret, this letter is also the world's best source of information about Thomas More's 'school'. Erasmus confesses to Budé that he had not formerly shared More's opinion about the value of educating women, but having seen More's daughters and stepdaughter being educated, like their brother, by the best of tutors, he has changed his mind. The letter begins with praise of More the humanist:

<sup>19</sup> Warnicke, 'The Restive Wife'.

<sup>20</sup> Beilin, 'Learning and Virtue', p. 16. Another Continental humanist who wrote of Margaret before any of the Englishmen mentioned by Beilin is Juan Luis Vives, who was invited to spend some weeks in 1523 with the More family and its 'school'. In his *De conscribendis epistolis* he referred to Margaret as 'my own sister'. See Olivares-Merino, 'A Month with the Mores'.

<sup>21</sup> *CWE* 8: *Letters 1122 to 1251, 1520 to 1521* (1988), 294–99. References to this letter will be given by line number in the body of my text.

'But to be a good scholar himself and give generous support to all other scholars is not the only way in which he honours liberal studies. He takes pains to give his whole household an education in good literature, setting thereby a new precedent' (54–57). Erasmus tells Budé that in 1520, More had had all the children, independently, write to him. The unedited results (none known to be extant) enchanted the *Rotterdamois*. This charming group in the More household consists of More's three daughters and of Alice Elrington (one of Lady Alice's daughters by her first marriage), More's foster-daughter (Margaret Giggs), and the husbands of two of them (William Roper and Thomas Elrington). 'There you never see one of the girls idle, or busied with the trifles that women enjoy; they have a Livy in their hands' (80–81). Nor is Lady More left out. She, whose strength lies in common sense and experience rather than in book learning, is the household school administrator, giving tasks to all and making sure that they perform them (85–87). Even though Erasmus had said that he tried to dissuade More from his second marriage, he seems to have entered easily enough into the rough and tumble bantering of More and the woman he referred to in a prison letter as 'my good bedfellow'.<sup>22</sup> In More's letter of 15 December 1516 (Allen II, Ep. 502), to Erasmus, Alice thanks Erasmus for wishing her a long life, and More adds: 'She is all the more eager for this, she says, because it means she can plague me all the longer'.

This letter to Budé is written the year of Margaret's marriage. Fifteen months later at Christmas, after the birth of their first child, Erasmus writes to Margaret (Allen v, Ep. 1404), with a gift, his commentary on the hymns of Prudentius for Christmas and Epiphany.<sup>23</sup> The effusiveness of his delight in learned women has not worn off in the meantime, for he begins by referring to the charming letters he has received from her and her sisters (3–5). Were their names not on them, he would still recognize the writing of true offspring of More. (None of these letters is known to be extant.) But this preface to his commentary on Prudentius has a richer meaning: 'Each of you has presented the other with a baby [...] to be smothered in kisses' (15–16).<sup>24</sup> And here is Erasmus sending another baby —

<sup>22</sup> More, *Correspondence*, ed. by Rogers, Letter 210, p. 544, l. 159; also found in More, *Selected Letters*, ed. by Rogers, Letter 60, p. 239.

<sup>23</sup> *CWE 10: Letters 1356 to 1534, 1523 to 1524* (1995), 133–35. References to this letter will be given by line number in the body of my text. For a study of this letter in its familial setting and of the Hymns of Prudentius, see Béné, 'Cadeau d'Érasme à Margaret Roper'.

<sup>24</sup> The definitive reference to the birth of the Ropers' first child is this letter (Allen v, Ep. 1404, Basel, 23 December 1523). Contrary to the Toronto English translation, however — which adds 'boy' after 'baby' — Erasmus says nothing about the gender of the newborn.

Jesus. May Margaret sing that baby's praises to her little ones 'with songs and every sort of music-making' (16–23). Nor will Jesus 'despise the singing of his praises by such a married pair, whose whole life shows such innocence, such concord, such tranquillity, and such simplicity that you could hardly find those under a vow of virginity who would challenge the comparison' (25–28).

In his epigram 'To Candidus on choosing a wife', More extols the solidity of marriages between learned couples.<sup>25</sup> And likewise does Erasmus in his colloquy 'The Abbot and the Learned Lady', first printed in March 1524 as *Antronijs, Magdalia*, the two interlocutors of the dialogue. In later printings the title was changed to *Abbatis et eruditae*. Antronijs, an unlearned and unholy abbot is no match for the learned Magdalia.<sup>26</sup> If there is a question about Morean identification in *Coniugium*, there is none in *Abbatis et eruditae*. As Thompson explains: 'We can be confident that Magdalia is drawn with Margaret Roper [...] in mind. There is no other learned woman Erasmus knew so well or esteemed so highly' (p. 409). The marital relationship described by Magdalia is also in accord with that praised by Erasmus in his dedication to the *Prudentius* (Allen v, Ep. 1404). When Antronijs says that he would not wish his monks to spend their time on books, Magdalia answers, 'Yet my husband heartily approves of my doing so' (p. 502, l. 4), and when the abbot objects that he would not want a learned wife, Magdalia replies of her husband, 'learning renders him dearer to me and me dearer to him' (p. 504, l. 7). Near the end of the colloquy she reminds Antronijs

He simply uses the Greek *παιδίον* (little child), l. 12. The Brussels French translation (Erasmus, *Correspondance*, ed. by Gerlo, v, 464), uses the correct translation, *petit enfant*, but notes that the reference is apparently to their first-born son Thomas, who in 1577 succeeded his father in the Court of the King's Bench. The Ropers did have a son Thomas (and a younger son Antony), along with three daughters. Thomas, however, was born in 1534, did succeed his father on the King's Bench in 1577, and died in 1598. In his recent work, Guy, *A Daughter's Love* — following Margaret Bowker's article 'Roper [*née* More], Margaret' in Matthew, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, XLVII: *Rippon-Rowe* — identifies the baby to whom Erasmus dedicated his commentary on two hymns of Prudentius as Elizabeth, named for Margaret's next younger sister. In an e-mail to this author, Guy points out that later dates in Elizabeth Roper's life coincide with a birth date of 1523.

<sup>25</sup> *CW*, III, 2, 'To Candidus: How to Choose a Wife', no. 143, pp. 180–93, esp. ll. 186–89. For an edition in Latin, French, and English, see More, *To Candidus: Qualis uxor deligenda*, ed. and trans. by Marc'hadour.

<sup>26</sup> *Abbatis et eruditae* [*The Abbot and the Learned Lady*], in Erasmus, *Colloquies*, trans. by Thompson, pp. 499–519. References to this colloquy will be given in the body of my text by page number for the introduction and notes, and by page and line number for the colloquy itself.

that lettered women are not so rare as he thinks: 'In Spain and Italy there are not a few women of the highest rank who can rival any man. In England there are the More daughters, in Germany the Pirckheimer and the Blarer ladies' (p. 504, ll. 39–41). If the unlettered abbot represents a type of churchman anathema to Erasmus, then his interlocutor represents a growing class of learned women throughout Europe, identified in England with More's daughters.

\* \* \*

### *John More*

Francis Bacon writes in one of his *Apophthegms*:

Sir Thomas More had only daughters at the first, and his wife did ever pray for a boy. At last she had a boy, which being come to man's estate, proved but simple. Sir Thomas said to his wife, 'Thou prayedst so long for a boy, that he will be a boy as long as he lives.'<sup>27</sup>

Since Joan More did not live until her son came 'to man's estate' (he was no more than two when she died), and since Alice More was not John's mother, this story can have no foundation but that of a folkloric or a jest book scenario into which any available players can be inserted. Still the rumour persists that John More was retarded. On the other hand, More in one of his letters praises John's epistolary efforts above those of his sisters.<sup>28</sup> What light can be shed on this subject by Erasmus?

Just a few days before Erasmus sent Margaret the letter-preface to his commentary on the hymns of Prudentius, he had sent John a letter prefacing the gift of his commentary on the poem *Nux*, attributed to Ovid (Allen v, Ep. 1402).<sup>29</sup> Indeed Froben published the two commentaries in one binding. John was fourteen, and Erasmus shows a talent for dealing with an adolescent, by turns joking with him and encouraging him to study. Friends they must have been, for Erasmus says that he has been receiving letters from John (none known to be extant), and now sends a response, an elegant nut tree speaking good Latin (3–8). Erasmus would appre-

<sup>27</sup> *Apophthegms*, in Bacon, *Essays*, p. 364.

<sup>28</sup> In a letter of 1522 (?) 'To His Children and Margaret Gyge': More, *Correspondence*, ed. by Rogers, Letter 107, p. 256, ll. 10–17; More, *Selected Letters*, ed. by Rogers, Letter 32, p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> *CWE* 10, 128–31. References to this letter will be given by line number in the body of my text.

ciate John's sharing this gift with his sisters. He may not wish to divide the tree, but a nut falls nicely into four pieces (35–37). Erasmus says that he has become a child again playing with nuts (18–19). Play for Erasmus also consists partly of teaching John a little about Latin and Greek literature. He encourages him to live up to his father's 'great distinction' (49–50).<sup>30</sup> To spur him on, he suggests competition with his sisters, called alternately the three Graces and 'Muses at play in the flowery fields of Helicon' (56, 62); their progress is such that one would think 'they had formed a plan and wished to leave their brother far behind' (65–67). 'All the more therefore must you devote all your energies to the race so that, nature having given them a start on the course by making them a little older than you are, you may overtake them by your keenness in your studies'. They will rival Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, while John will be in competition with his father, who wants nothing more than for John to overtake him (66–74).

\* \* \*

On 13 May 1531, Bebel published in Basle *Aristotelis Opera* (Greek with a Latin title), edited by Simon Grynaeus. This was the second edition of Aristotle in Greek, the first having been published by Aldus. The Bebel edition, however, has the distinction of carrying a preface by Erasmus in the form of a letter to John More written from Freiburg-im-Breisgau on 27 February 1531 (Allen IX, Ep. 2432).<sup>31</sup> John More is no longer the adolescent in need of joking or prodding. He is now a young man of twenty-two, fully deserving it seems of being the dedicatee of Aristotle's complete works in Greek. He is already married to Anne Cresacre and their first child Thomas will be born the following August.<sup>32</sup>

Whether or not Erasmus had a means of reading Dante we do not know, but he certainly agreed with the Tuscan that Aristotle was *il maestro di color che sanno*. He tells John that Aristotle was the most learned of all philosophers, according to Cicero, not excepting even Plato (1–3). While eight years earlier Erasmus had exhorted John to apply himself, here he tells him that having devoured the bet-

<sup>30</sup> John himself published two translations from Latin into English. 'A Sermon of the Sacrament of the Altar' by Frederick Nausea, was printed by William Rastell in 1533. See Blackburn, 'John More's *A Sermon of the Sacrament of the Aulter*'. 'The Legacy of Prester John' by Damião á Goes was also printed by Rastell in 1533. See Blackburn, 'The Legacy of "Prester John"'.  
<sup>31</sup> Erasmus, *Correspondance*, ed. by Gerlo, IX: 1530–1532, ed. by Beaulieu, Vannerom, and Rémy (1980), pp. 191–200. References to this letter will be given by line number in the body of my text.

<sup>32</sup> *Érasme de Rotterdam et Thomas More: Correspondance*, ed. by Marc'hadour, p. 232.

ter aspects of study, he is gathering the sweet fruits of philosophy, especially he — born of such a father and educated by him since his tender infancy, no less in the disciplines of Latin and Greek than in Christian piety (26–32). John is more fortunate to have been born of such a father than of kings or emperors.<sup>33</sup>

If John is grateful for such blessedness — as Erasmus thinks he is — he can do nothing other than thank God, as well as thank the piety of such an excellent father (40–45). Furthermore, Erasmus considers John to be now initiated into the august mysteries of philosophy, and to have joined wisdom to eloquence (60–64). As he thought of all that, it occurred to Erasmus to dedicate to John this Aristotle. Erasmus elaborates a little on Aristotle's status as the prince of all philosophy, and on the homage paid to him by Cicero as a good estimator (69–86, and Allen l. 64). Then follows a six-page catalogue of Aristotle's works by genre and authenticity, and a comparison of editions and translations. Erasmus closes by returning to the learning and piety of the More household, owed to the example of the *paterfamilias* (373–79).

### *Erasmus the Biographer*

Germain Marc'hadour has called Erasmus 'the first and best biographer of More'. Erasmus told Hutten that More was the friend he loved best. Several lines later he writes that he will try to sketch in outline form the whole man 'based on long-standing and intimate acquaintance' (29–30). Many years after, in the letter to Johann Faber, he speaks of a long friendship that has given him a certain sense of having penetrated More's character (181–82). Even Roper as son-in-law did not have the close intellectual and spiritual association with More that Erasmus had. Some will protest that the love Erasmus bore toward his friend made him into a hagiographer. (Hagiography is, of course, a valid literary genre with its own attributes, but that is another story.) The situation is more likely the reverse: Erasmus did not make More into someone praiseworthy because he loved his long-time friend. Rather he loved and praised him and treasured his friendship for the kind of man More was.

As Léon-E. Halkin has written, Erasmus more than others understood that the roots of European civilization lay in Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem, and that

<sup>33</sup> Erasmus had experience of both. See, for example, Vanden Branden, *Érasme*, Chapter VI, entitled: 'Charles Quint, le plus mauvais élève d'Érasme [Charles V, the worst student of Erasmus]'.

to cut these roots would kill humanism and sap the European heritage.<sup>34</sup> Christ-centredness was, according to Halkin, the golden rule of the spirituality and the theology of Erasmus, and the unforgettable examples were his friends Colet and Vitrier as clergy,<sup>35</sup> and More as layman.<sup>36</sup> As layman, More was also father of a family, and this afforded him a particular role. The recalcitrant young wife of the colloquy *Coniugium* needs to be educated by her husband because she had spent her time in her parents' home 'in complete idleness and been brought up amidst the chatter and pranks of servants' (p. 314, ll. 32–33). No wonder that as a young wife she balks at being educated. Comparing her with the More daughters 'who have a Livy in their hands' might suggest why Erasmus so praises them and praises the marriage of the Ropers, which he compares to a religious vocation — another indication of that which is Christocentric. The 'school' of More's household educated all in the *bonae litterae* which constitute the basis of the *philosophia Christi*. As *paterfamilias*, he transmitted the heritage of European civilization to his children, and Erasmus praises the whole family, including Lady Alice More, who saw to it that all her charges played their parts.

<sup>34</sup> Halkin, *Érasme parmi nous*, p. 406.

<sup>35</sup> See Erasmus, *Vies de Jean Vitrier et de John Colet*, ed. and trans. by Godin.

<sup>36</sup> Halkin, *Érasme parmi nous*, p. 421.



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# LES LETTRES DE DIRK MARTENS, IMPRIMEUR D'ÉRASME

Alexandre Vanautgaerden

## 1. *Érasme et Dirk Martens (1516–21)*

Après avoir rédigé un premier article consacré aux lettres d'imprimeur signées par Johann Froben, dans lequel une typologie des lettres d'imprimeur a été esquissée et le fonctionnement de l'atelier d'écriture dans l'officine frobenienne décrit, il convenait de se demander si l'on retrouve une situation identique dans l'officine du second imprimeur d'Érasme, Dirk Martens.

Consacrons d'abord la première partie de cet article à un survol de la production générale de Martens et des éditions érasmienne de son officine, ce qui permettra de définir le cadre de l'enquête, avant de revenir aux lettres. La production connue de l'imprimeur alostois s'élève aujourd'hui à 289 publications.<sup>1</sup> Il est fort probable qu'un certain nombre de textes à tirage réduit, destinés

<sup>1</sup> 272 éditions sont connues par au moins un exemplaires, 17 éditions sont mentionnées dans les sources anciennes. On trouvera une liste des publications de Dirk Martens dressée par Kamiel Heireman dans le 'Catalogus van Martensdrukken', in Alost 1973, pp. 261–88. On a retranché de cette liste les émissions (par ex. les deux éditions du *Iulius exclusus* sous les numéros M. 158 et M. 169 qui sont en réalité une seule édition, Érasme ayant fait retirer en cours de tirage le colophon qui identifiait l'impression comme un livre de Martens et datait la publication), et on la complète par l'ajout notamment de la découverte de l'édition de la *Logica Vetus*, datée de 1474. Cf. Needham, 'Fragment of an Unrecorded Edition of the First Alost Press', et le mémoire de Adam, *Un fantôme retrouvé*. Les travaux de Nijhoff et Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche Bibliographie*, ainsi que ceux de Van Thienen et Goldfinch, *Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries*, ont été très précieux dans l'établissement des listes des éditions de Dirk Martens. Nous remercions Renaud Adam, avec qui nous préparons une exposition sur Dirk Martens à la Maison d'Érasme en 2009 pour sa collaboration à l'édition de ce census qui sera

aux étudiants, sont devenus ‘bibliographiquement insaisissables’, selon la belle formule de Cornelis Reedijk.<sup>2</sup>

La production générale peut se diviser en six parties selon le lieu d’implantation de l’officine:

Premier atelier à Alost: 1473–74	7 éd. (avec Jean de Westphalie)
Deuxième atelier à Alost: 1486–92	13 éd.
Premier atelier à Anvers: 1493–97	21 éd.
Atelier d’Alost ou d’Anvers: c. 1496–97	6 éd. <sup>3</sup>
Premier atelier à Louvain: 1497–1501	12 éd.
Atelier de Louvain ou d’Alost: c. 1502 (?)	1 éd. <sup>4</sup>
Deuxième atelier à Anvers: 1502–12	68 éd.
Deuxième atelier à Louvain: 1512–29	194 éd.

Érasme collabore directement avec Dirk Martens à deux moments : en 1503–04 et 1514–19. Dirk Martens, au total, aura contribué à l’impression de 47 textes d’Érasme,<sup>5</sup> et à 24 textes édités par l’humaniste,<sup>6</sup> dont 32 éditions princeps. Plus du quart de sa production générale est donc consacré à Érasme.

Ce nombre de 32 éditions princeps fait de Dirk Martens le deuxième imprimeur érasmien, loin cependant derrière les 150 princeps de l’officine frobenienne.

\* \* \*

Après leur première collaboration, il faut attendre dix ans pour que Dirk Martens puisse imprimer une nouvelle édition princeps érasmienne, en septembre 1514.

publié dans le catalogue de l’exposition “Passeurs de textes” (Brepols, coll. *Nugæ humanisticæ*, vol. XI, à paraître).

<sup>2</sup> Reedijk, ‘Érasme, Thierry Martens et le Julius exclusus’, p. 354; voir aussi sur le même sujet De Vocht, *History of the Foundation and the Rise of the Collegium*, II, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Alost 1973 (M. 20–24, M. 56) et Van Thienen et Goldfinch, *Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries* (1791, 1717, 660, 1884, 1339, 1776).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Van Thienen et Goldfinch, *Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries*, A94, et Nijhoff et Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche Bibliographie*, p. 1862.

<sup>5</sup> Les 47 impressions de textes d’Érasme se répartissent comme suit: 25 éditions princeps, 17 rééditions, 3 éditions qui ne paraissent pas sous son nom mais auxquelles il contribue, 2 éditions d’un autre auteur mais qui contiennent des pièces annexes inédites d’Érasme.

<sup>6</sup> Les 24 impressions de textes édités par Érasme se répartissent comme suit: 6 éditions princeps, 17 rééditions, et une édition latine du Nouveau Testament qui contient une préface inédite (Allen IV, Ep. 1010).

La date peut surprendre, car Érasme réside alors à Bâle. En réalité, la présence de cette édition princeps s'explique par la volonté d'Érasme de renouer des liens sur le continent à partir de novembre 1513, après qu'il eut admis son incapacité à dénicher un véritable mécène en Angleterre.

Érasme confie alors un texte à Maarten Dorp afin qu'il soit imprimé dans les Pays-Bas. Dans son mémoire à propos de la *Moria*, le théologien signale que Dirk Martens s'était rendu de Louvain à Anvers pour rencontrer Érasme. L'humaniste résidait en réalité à Louvain. Apprenant cette nouvelle à son arrivée dans la métropole scaldienne, l'imprimeur revient aussitôt en toute hâte, cheminant la nuit. Malheureusement, il arrive à Louvain une heure et demie après le départ d'Érasme.

Cette histoire de la marche nocturne de Martens est souvent rapportée pour témoigner de leur amitié profonde.<sup>7</sup> Or, les termes de la lettre de Dorp font entendre clairement qu'il n'y a plus eu de lien entre Martens et Érasme depuis leur première collaboration plus de dix ans auparavant, car le théologien se sent obligé de rappeler à Érasme, en évoquant l'imprimeur, qu'il 's'agit du typographe qui a imprimé l'*Enchiridion* et le *Panegyricus*'.<sup>8</sup>

Même son de cloche en 1515, dans une lettre de Maarten Dorp qui nous apprend que Dirk Martens a supplié Dorp de le recommander auprès d'Érasme; le théologien s'exécute, et demande à l'humaniste qu'il lui confie quelque chose à imprimer par gentillesse (Allen II, Ep. 347. Louvain 27 août 1515). Mais Érasme est alors trop occupé à Bâle pour confier une princeps à un imprimeur qui lui est devenu étranger; en 1515, les sept éditions érasmiennes qui paraissent dans l'officine de Martens ne sont que des rééditions.

La collaboration véritable débute après le séjour d'Érasme à Bâle (1514–16), quand l'humaniste rentre aux Pays-Bas pour assumer sa charge de conseiller du Prince Charles.

<sup>7</sup> Pour une première élaboration de la fiction amicale, cf. Gand, *Recherches historiques et critiques sur la vie et les éditions de Thierry Martens*, pp. 26–27.

<sup>8</sup> Nous donnons ici le passage où Dorp recommande Martens à Érasme et lui relate son voyage nocturne entre Anvers et Louvain, cf. Allen II, Ep. 304, Louvain (septembre 1514), 148–56: 'Theodoricus Alustensis chalcographus, qui 'Enchiridion' et 'Panegyricum' impressit, oravit me uti se commendarem tuæ humanitati. Cupivit plurimum videre te, cupivit hospicio comiter ac liberaliter excipere, et ea de causa Antwerpian profectus, ut rescivit te non illic sed Lovanii esse, ilico recurrit ac totam ambulans noctem venit postridie Lovanium sesquihora ferme postquam abivisses. Si qua in re potest tibi gratificari, omnia pollicetur, et haud scio an omnium hominum vivat homo tui amantior'.

Érasme quitte Johann Froben le 12 mai 1516 et emprunte la voie rhénane pour atteindre Anvers dix-sept jours plus tard. Là, il loge chez son ami Pieter Gillis, puis réside tantôt à Bruxelles, tantôt à Anvers. En juillet 1517, il se fixe à Louvain, de ‘façon provisoire’ (*certum est menses aliquot desiderare*),<sup>9</sup> mais néanmoins avec sa bibliothèque (*Lovanium commigravi totus*).<sup>10</sup>

L’humaniste loge d’abord chez Jean Desmarez (Paludanus), avant de déménager en août au Collège du Lys où il trouve plus de place pour étaler ses livres (*ubi plus spatii sit libris explicandis*).<sup>11</sup> Il est immatriculé le 30 août 1517 à l’université de Louvain, mais il s’est peut-être rendu à Louvain dès janvier 1517, pour rencontrer les théologiens.<sup>12</sup>

À partir de l’été 1516, fixé désormais aux Pays-Bas, Érasme donne ses nouveaux textes à Dirk Martens. Le second semestre ne voit plus paraître aucune princeps à Bâle.

La première édition princeps importante d’Érasme chez Martens date de juillet 1516; il s’agit de la traduction du premier livre de la *Grammaire* de Théodore Gaza.<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \*

La fin de la carrière de Dirk Martens est un véritable feu d’artifice. L’augmentation phénoménale du nombre d’éditions dans son officine correspond au séjour d’Érasme aux Pays-Bas (juin 1516–octobre 1521). Dirk Martens est pourtant un homme âgé en 1516 (il a 66 ans). Cinq ans plus tard, le septuagénaire peut regarder avec fierté les cinq années qui viennent de s’écouler: pendant cette courte période il a imprimé presque autant de livres que pendant les quarante-deux années précédentes.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Érasme à Willibald Pirckheimer, de Louvain le 2 novembre 1517, Allen III, Ep. 694. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Érasme à Thomas More, (Louvain, c. 10 juillet 1510), Allen III, Ep. 597. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Érasme à Cuthbert Tunstall, Louvain (31 août 1517), Allen III, Ep. 643. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Dans une lettre écrite d’Anvers le 18 janvier 1517, Pieter Gillis rapporte que Dirk (Martens) lui a raconté quel accueil amical lui avaient réservé les théologiens de Louvain, cf. Allen II, Ep. 515. 5–7.

<sup>13</sup> Deux autres princeps d’Érasme paraissent encore en 1516, mais ce sont des ouvrages édités par l’Anversois Pieter Gillis. Thomas More, *Utopia cum notis Erasmi*, 1516, in-4° et les *Epistole aliquot illustrium virorum ad Erasmus Roterodamum et huius ad illos*, 16 octobre 1516, in-4°.

<sup>14</sup> De 1473 à 1515, Dirk Martens avait imprimé 131 livres. De 1516 à 1521, il imprime pas moins de 111 éditions.

Dans ce catalogue imposant (pour un petit imprimeur), plus de la moitié des publications sont consacrées à Érasme. En 1519, Dirk Martens consacre ses presses presque uniquement à l'humaniste.

Les *Erasmiana* chez Martens se caractérisent par le nombre important d'éditions princeps des *Paraphrases* (sept) et par les textes apologétiques; Érasme confie à l'officine louvaniste les textes contre Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, contre Diego López Zúñiga, pour la défense de sa déclamation sur le mariage, et sur le *In principio erat sermo*.

\* \* \*

En 1520, on observe une baisse du nombre d'éditions érasmienne dans l'officine, car Érasme confie trois textes apologétiques ainsi qu'une paraphrase inédite à un concurrent de Dirk Martens: Michaël Hillen à Anvers.

Ce phénomène s'explique par la volonté de l'humaniste de réduire au silence ses opposants. Croiser le fer avec l'humaniste n'est pas chose aisée, car cela suppose de pouvoir recourir à un imprimeur qui dispose de caractères latins en romain, c'est le minimum, mais surtout de caractères grecs, et au besoin, de caractères hébreux. Edward Lee, qui s'oppose aux *Annotations* d'Érasme au Nouveau Testament, va faire les frais de cette situation.

Un tel imprimeur, trilingue, ne court pas les rues dans les Pays-Bas dans les années 1520. Il y en a, en tout et pour tout, trois. Le premier n'est pas disponible pour éditer des pamphlets contre Érasme, car il s'agit de Dirk Martens: Edward Lee le considère explicitement inféodé à Érasme.<sup>15</sup>

Le théologien anglais, fixé alors à Louvain, se rend dans la ville voisine d'Anvers pour tenter de se faire publier. Là, deux officines seulement sont en mesure de publier des textes grecs: les imprimeries de Michael Hillen et du Français Jean Thibault.<sup>16</sup>

Il conclut affaire d'abord avec le Français, qui après avoir accepté le travail et préparé les caractères de la première épreuve, interrompt les ouvriers et prévient Lee qu'il ne désire plus poursuivre ce projet. Un des ouvriers de Thibault raconte à Edward Lee qu'un domestique d'Érasme est venu voir son patron afin de faire pression sur lui. Thibault revient finalement sur sa décision et propose de repren-

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Allen iv, Ep. 1061. 854–56.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Thibault est né sans doute à Gournay-en-Bray (Seine maritime) et travaille comme imprimeur à Anvers de 1519 à 1531, où il imprime une vingtaine d'ouvrages. Imprimeur, graveur de poinçons typographiques, il est également médecin et s'intéresse à l'alchimie (il se désigne comme 'doctor empiricus'). Il fut le seul à employer des lettres romaines et italiques aldines, qu'il avait taillées et qui sont les premières exécutées dans les Pays-Bas. Cf. Rouzet, *Dictionnaire des imprimeurs, libraires et éditeurs*, pp. 219–20, et Vervliet, 'Jan Thibault'.

dre le travail, à condition de réviser leur contrat: l'Anglais devra prendre désormais à sa charge deux cents ouvrages, et non plus trente. On n'a aucune indication du tirage prévu à Anvers, mais il est raisonnable de penser que ce type d'ouvrages aurait été imprimé à 400 ou 500 exemplaires. Edward Lee, selon cette hypothèse, aurait payé près de la moitié de l'impression. Cependant, subodorant le traquenard, l'Anglais refuse ce nouvel accord de peur qu'Érasme ne puisse suivre page après page l'impression de son ouvrage et publier sa réponse en même temps que lui-même ses *Annotations aux annotations d'Érasme*: dans son esprit, le premier à publier aura gagné!<sup>17</sup>

Edward Lee se tourne alors vers Michael Hillen, meilleur imprimeur que le Français,<sup>18</sup> mais plus proche encore d'Érasme. Dans un premier temps, Hillen accepte, puis se dédit une heure plus tard! L'affaire n'est pas simple. Là encore, Edward Lee rend Érasme responsable de son échec.

Il n'a pas tort. Afin de contrarier l'impression de son ouvrage, Érasme recourt à un procédé astucieux, qui consiste à offrir à l'imprimeur du camp adverse un texte inédit, à la condition expresse que celui-ci soit imprimé immédiatement, ce qui retarde l'impression du pamphlet de son opposant, et lui permet de soigner sa réponse.

C'est en vertu de ce stratagème que l'imprimeur anversoise peut figurer au rang des éditeurs ayant bénéficié du privilège d'avoir édité des princeps. Érasme lui confie ses *Paraphrases aux Épîtres à Timothée et à Tite* afin d'empêcher l'impression de l'ouvrage de Lee en décembre 1519. C'est à la suite de ce nouveau camoufflet que l'Anglais se décida à aller publier son ouvrage en France, près de la Sorbonne, loin de l'influence de l'humaniste.<sup>19</sup>

Il est fort probable que c'est en remerciement qu'Érasme publie chez Michaël Hillen, et non chez Dirk Martens, ses trois *Responsiones* contre Edward Lee;

<sup>17</sup> Le thème est habituel dans l'Europe humaniste pleine de polémiques littéraires et théologiques. Dans les échanges entre Érasme et Luther, par exemple, Érasme doit parfois presser son imprimeur Froben de publier au plus vite un ouvrage répondant à Luther, afin que celui-ci soit disponible pour la grande foire de Francfort qui lui donnera toute sa publicité. Car, avance Érasme, si nous ne sommes pas prêts pour la foire du printemps, Luther aura gagné jusqu'à la foire d'automne.

<sup>18</sup> Thibault publie parfois ses ouvrages avec tellement de fautes qu'il est obligé de les réimprimer avec une lettre d'excuses à ses lecteurs, comme c'est le cas pour le texte de Barland, *De Hollandiæ principibus*, en 1519.

<sup>19</sup> Pour l'exposé complet de la polémique, cf. Christian Charlier, *Érasme et Lee*, Université de Liège, Mémoire inédit, 1979/80; Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate*; Asso, *La Teologia e la grammatica*; Vanautgaerden, 'Le Grammairien, l'imprimeur et le sycophante'; et Huijing, 'Textual Variants in Erasmus' Polemics'.



respectivement en mars,<sup>20</sup> avril,<sup>21</sup> et mai 1520.<sup>22</sup> Accessoirement, il lui offre une préface à un ouvrage de Vivès en avril de la même année.<sup>23</sup> On sait la valeur commerciale que représente une préface d'Érasme; ses imprimeurs le harcèlent afin d'obtenir de telles épîtres.<sup>24</sup>

Dirk Martens participe également, à sa façon, à la défense des intérêts d'Érasme. Regardons la page de titre de la seconde édition des *Colloques* imprimée par ses soins. Cette édition de Louvain, si l'on s'en tient à la correspondance et aux dires d'Érasme, se contente de corriger les éditions frobeniennes fautives, sans que l'humaniste ne réclame la paternité de son œuvre. Pourtant, le matériel typographique de cette édition est déjà une affirmation, via son imprimeur Dirk Martens, de la reprise par Érasme de 'sa marchandise'.

Rappelons brièvement que les *Familiarium colloquiorum formule et alia quedam* paraissent de façon subreptice à Bâle, chez Johann Froben en novembre 1518 sous la direction de Beatus Rhenanus, sans qu'Érasme ne soit informé de ce projet; il réside alors dans les Pays-Bas.<sup>25</sup> Le manuscrit qui sert de base à l'édition fut rédigé en 1498 à Paris en faveur d'Augustin Caminade qui en avait vendu des copies à différentes reprises. Beatus Rhenanus réussit à s'emparer d'une de ces copies, grâce à la venue dans la cité rhénane d'un Liégeois, Lambert de Hollogne. Le texte est réédité par Froben en février 1519, augmenté d'une pièce.<sup>26</sup> Les deux éditions bâloises sont pourvues du même encadrement gravé au titre (cf. Fig. 3).

<sup>20</sup> *Apologia nihil habens neque nasi, neque dentis, neque stomachi, neque unguium, qua respondet duabus invectivis Eduardi Lei, nihil addo qualibus, ipse iudicato lector.*

<sup>21</sup> *Erasmi Roterodami Responsio ad Annotationes Eduardi Lei, quibus incessit loca quedam ex annotationibus eius quibus ille explanavit quattuor Euangelia, iuxta priorem editionem. Ex his interim coniecturam facito lector, reliquum operis propediem accepturus.*

<sup>22</sup> *Liber tertius Erasmi Roterodami quo respondet reliquis annotationibus Eduardo Lei.*

<sup>23</sup> *Vivis Declamationes Syllane.*

<sup>24</sup> Les auteurs ne demeurent guère plus en reste dans leur demande. Cf. Caspar Ursinus Velius qui, le 18 février 1522, avait essayé d'amener Érasme à lui écrire une préface pour ses *Poemata* (Bâle: Froben, mars 1522) et une recommandation pour Ferdinand; cf. MS. de Bâle G2 11.80.130.

<sup>25</sup> Sur les *Colloques*, la bibliographie est immense; on se contentera de citer: Vander Haeghen et coll., *Bibliotheca Erasmi*, IV: *Colloquia* (1903), et les deux ouvrages de Bierlaire, *Les Colloques d'Érasme*, et Bierlaire, *Érasme et ses 'Colloques'*. Le texte des *Colloques* a été publié dans ASD 1-3, éd. par Halkin, Bierlaire, et Hoven (1972).

<sup>26</sup> La nouvelle pièce se trouve aux pp. 76-79: *Quis sit modus repetende lectionis.*



Figure 3.  
Erasmus, *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae, et alia quaedam, per Des. Erasmum Roterodamum* (Basel: Froben, 1518), page de titre.

Un encadrement historié à rinceaux contenant, dans sa partie supérieure, la marque de Froben, deux mains sortant des nuages et tenant un caducée que surplombe une colombe; et, dans le registre inférieur, un combat entre deux hommes montant des chevaux marins.

Lorsque Érasme décide de corriger la seconde édition bâloise de son texte 'dérobé' par Johann Froben, Dirk Martens compose une mise en page qui utilise des caractères romains sans encadrement, veillant seulement à mentionner au titre 'per Erasmum recognita' (cf. Fig. 4)

Six mois plus tard, quand ils décident avec Érasme de remettre l'ouvrage sur les presses, Martens écrit dans son épître au lecteur qu'il a réimprimé l'ouvrage sans se préoccuper de qui en est l'auteur ni à quelle source il a puisé, car il est très utile pour la discussion quotidienne: 'rursus excudi colloquiorum libellum, cuiuscumque sit, et undecumque concinnatus, non inutilem ad parandam facultatem cottidiani sermonis' (f. a iii<sup>v</sup>).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Voir le texte complet de la lettre en annexe, texte 15.

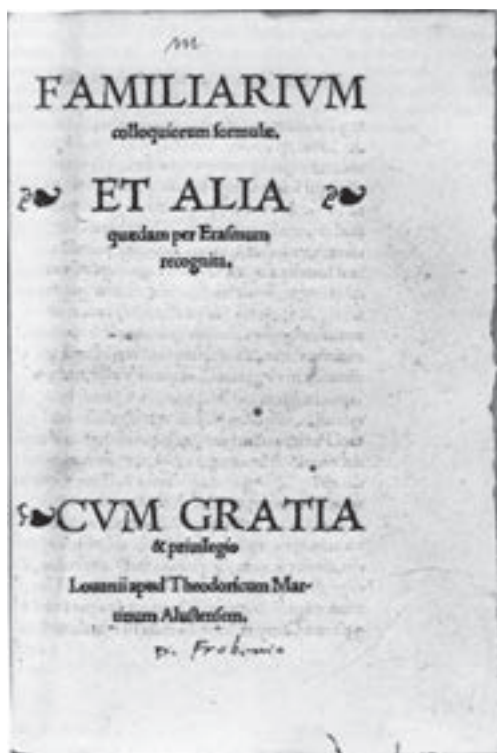


Figure 4. Erasmus, *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae, et alia quaedam per Erasmum recognita* (Louvain: Martens, 1519), page de titre.

Érasme a corrigé et augmenté cet ouvrage, avec le soutien de Dirk Martens; l'humaniste semble prendre plaisir, avec cette édition, à reprendre à Froben le bien qui lui a été dérobé. Et, afin de punir l'impétrant, il décide de le pasticher. Ainsi, la page de titre de l'édition revue est une contrefaçon de celle employée pour l'édition subreptice de novembre 1518, Martens y glissant seulement son ancre à la place du caducée de Froben (cf. Fig. 5a et 5b).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Vandeweghe et Op de Beeck, *Drukkersmerken uit de 15<sup>de</sup> en de 16<sup>de</sup> eeuw*. Cette marque correspond à la marque numéro 6, reproduite p. 163. Les auteurs mentionnent seulement des impressions de Martens en 1520 qui utilisent cette marque (cf. p. 40). Comme on peut le constater, c'est en 1519 que le prototypographe fait graver ce bois afin de pasticher la marque de Johann Froben.



Figure 5a. Erasmus, *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae, et alia quaedam, per Des. Erasmus Roterodamum* (Basel: Froben, 1518), page de titre.



Figure 5b. Erasmus, *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae, in gratiam iuuentutis recognitae & auctae ab Erasmo Rotero. Et alia quaedam per eundem autorem* (Louvain: Martens, 1519), page de titre.

Venons-en aux lettres d'imprimeur, maintenant que le 'rapport de force' est posé entre les deux officines privilégiées d'Érasme.

## 2. L'Œuvre latin de Dirk Martens

Si Johann Froben était dénommé l'Alde du Nord, on a également surnommé Dirk Martens l'Alde des Pays-Bas, et l'imprimeur lui-même a comparé son action à celle d'Alde.<sup>29</sup> Il n'a pas enseigné à l'université de Louvain, comme les textes

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Serna Santander, *Dictionnaire bibliographique choisi du quinzième siècle*, 1, 297. Sur la page de titre de la *Paraphrasis in Pauli epistolam ad Romanos* d'Érasme en 1517, l'imprimeur compare son travail, exécuté avec de faibles moyens au profit de l'Université de Louvain, à celui réalisé par Alde Manuce pour la propagation des belles-lettres (annexe, texte 9: 'Quantum habeat momenti typographorum ars ad provehenda litterarum studia, vel unus ille Aldus Manutius esse

patriotiques du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle l'on rapporté, après les éditions du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle de Lodovico Guicciardini.<sup>30</sup> Les biographes de Dirk Martens acceptent l'idée qu'il a appris le latin au couvent des Pères Guilielmities, à Alost, avant d'aller apprendre son métier en Italie. Il paraît évident à tous les biographes depuis le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle que Dirk Martens, enfant d'Alost, s'est formé dans le couvent qui dispensait les études d'humanités dans cette ville. En réalité, aucun document ni témoignage contemporain n'atteste cela.<sup>31</sup> L'imprimeur était-il capable d'écrire le latin? Aucune lettre ni pièce ne permet de l'affirmer. Si l'on n'a pas de certitude quant à son aptitude à écrire, une lettre amusante de Maarten Dorp témoigne du don des langues de l'imprimeur et de sa capacité à parler latin.

Pendant son séjour aux Pays-Bas, Érasme effectue un voyage vers l'officine de Froben, de mai à septembre 1518, pour surveiller la mise au point de la nouvelle édition de son Nouveau Testament. De Bâle, l'humaniste envoie un famulus à

documento potest. Proinde nos quoque pro virili Lovaniensem Academiam, omni studiorum ac doctrinæ genere florentissimam, officina nostra qualicumque studemus adiuvare').

<sup>30</sup> La première mention de Dirk Martens comme professeur de l'Université de Louvain ne remonte pas comme on l'a écrit à la *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferiore* de Lodovico Guicciardini en 1567. En réalité, elle ne se trouve dans aucune des éditions italiennes publiées du vivant du Florentin (1567, 1581 et 1588). La mention est rajoutée dans les éditions du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans la description de la ville d'Alost, à partir de 1635. En 1613 à Amsterdam dans l'édition latine publiée par Guilielmus Janssonius, la notice de la ville d'Alost est identique à celle que l'on trouve dans les éditions de Guicciardini au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. En 1625, dans la traduction française qui paraît chez le même imprimeur, une phrase mentionne que dans la ville d'Alost sont nés les savants Grapheus et Stopius, cf. p. 374. En 1635, toujours à Amsterdam, mais chez l'imprimeur Guilielmus Blaeu, paraît une traduction latine dans laquelle est introduit pour la première fois le nom de Dirk Martens, avant celui de Grapheus et de Stopius, cf. p. 393: 'Nati hic Theodoricus Martini, vir doctrina clarissimus, publicus academiæ Lovaniensis professor [...] Cornelius Scribonius Grapheus [...] Nicolaus Stopius [...]': Pour étayer la thèse qui fait de Dirk Martens un professeur de l'université de Louvain, le père Alphonse F. Van Iseghem utilisait une lettre d'Érasme à Jos de Vroye van Gavere, rédigée de Bâle, le 1 mars 1523 (Allen v, Ep. 1347), dans laquelle l'humaniste cite l'imprimeur parmi un groupe de personnes qui ont succédé à Nevius à l'université de Louvain, cf. Van Iseghem, pp. 147–48. L'argumentation est démontée, entre autres, par Kamiel Heireman dans le catalogue d'Alost, cf. Alost 1973, A. 282, p. 197.

<sup>31</sup> Si l'affirmation suivante d'Alphonse F. Van Iseghem est gratuite: 'Tout ce que les documents de l'époque nous permettent d'affirmer au sujet de l'éducation de Martens, c'est qu'il apprit le latin, et peut-être un peu de grec, au couvent des Pères Guilielmities, qui étaient alors chargés de donner l'instruction à la jeunesse de sa ville natale' (Van Iseghem, p. 20), Kamiel Heireman écrit plus prudemment: 'Over zijn jeugd is niets met zekerheid geweten. Wel neemt men aan dat hij in het Wilhelmiensklooster zijn eerste opleiding kreeg en dat hij naderhand naar Italië is getrokken' (Alost 1973, p. 34).



Louvain (Jacques Nepos), avec une lettre pour Dorp.<sup>32</sup> Le théologien somme l'imprimeur de retenir le famulus à dîner, afin d'obtenir des nouvelles fraîches d'Érasme. La description du repas est savoureuse et breughelienne; Dirk Martens y est qualifié d'initié de Bacchus (*Bacchi mystæ*).<sup>33</sup> Pendant que, dans le vacarme de l'auberge, Jacques Nepos répond aux questions de Maarten Dorp, Dirk Martens boit en abondance et braille, car, rapporte Dorp, c'est à peu près dans toutes les langues qu'il parle, ou plutôt qu'il vous assomme: en allemand, en français, en italien et en latin. Tel un apôtre ressuscité, il oserait presque concurrencer Jérôme le polyglotte, sinon pour l'élégance, du moins pour le nombre des langues (Allen III, Ep. 852. 10–15: 'Et ecce dum nos fabulamur maxime, Theodoricus potitat maxime partesque agit at suas haud quaquam instrennue, ne ipse quidem interim ociosus a fabulis. Omnibus pæne linguis, loquitur dixerim an obturbat? Germanica, Gallica, Italica, Latina: ut in hoc apostolicum quempiam renatum credas; ut vel Hieronymum quamvis multilinguem, si non elegantia, numero tamen linguarum ausit provocare').

\* \* \*

Nous ne trouvons rien dans les documents de ses contemporains qui témoigne d'écrits humanistes rédigés par l'imprimeur. Il faut attendre 1643 et la *Bibliotheca Belgica* de Valère André pour voir apparaître une première liste de travaux de Dirk Martens. Celle-ci est composée d'hymnes sacrés, d'un traité sur les vertus rédigé sous forme dialoguée ainsi que d'autres pièces, simplement désignées sous le terme *aliaque*. Cette notice biographique de Valère André est développée en 1739 par Jean-François Foppens, mais sans rien ajouter à la liste de travaux.<sup>34</sup>

Aucune des deux œuvres citées n'a survécu; mais que recouvre ce *aliaque*? À partir du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la bibliographie consacrée à Dirk Martens a pris l'habitude de lui attribuer, au titre d'œuvre savante, ses épîtres au lecteur,<sup>35</sup> des travaux lexicaux et un catalogue des œuvres d'Érasme.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cette lettre est aujourd'hui perdue.

<sup>33</sup> Dirk Martens devait certainement partager son goût du vin avec Érasme.

<sup>34</sup> André, *Bibliotheca Belgica*, p. 824, et Foppens, *Bibliotheca belgica*, II, 1117, signalent que Dirk Martens: 'scripsit hymnos in honorem sanctorum, dialogum de virtutibus, aliaque'.

<sup>35</sup> Pour le texte latin des lettres de Dirk Martens, cf. l'annexe.

<sup>36</sup> Même si nous sommes en opposition avec les points de vue exprimés par le jésuite Alphonse F. Van Iseghem sur l'œuvre de Dirk Martens, sa biographie demeure très utile en raison de sa bibliographie commentée des éditions de Dirk Martens, qui contient nombre de pièces annexes présentes dans ces éditions. Pour le problème des lettres, cf. plus particulièrement les

Examinons d'abord le catalogue des œuvres d'Érasme. Celui-ci est le second du genre à être édité, après celui d'Adriaan Barland en 1516.<sup>37</sup> Dans la lettre sur la page de titre, Dirk Martens répond aux personnes qui tous les jours (*cottidie*) lui demandent de publier un tel catalogue. Pour leur donner satisfaction, il s'est adressé directement à Érasme et à ses amis (cf. annexe, texte 16).

Dirk Martens est-il l'auteur de ce catalogue? Non. Il en est fort probablement le commanditaire, peut-être le rédacteur final, mais au moins le premier jet a été rédigé par Érasme, ainsi que l'indiquent ses propos dans la lettre adressée à Conrad Mutianus, où il précise qu'il a rédigé un index de ses 'bagatelles', même s'il a des difficultés à s'en souvenir: 'Nugarum mearum indicem subtexui, etiamsi ipse vix memini ineptiarum mearum'.<sup>38</sup>

La lettre de Martens ne dit d'ailleurs pas qu'il a composé ce catalogue. Elle informe le lecteur qu'il a imprimé les titres qu'il a pu recueillir en s'adressant directement à l'auteur et à ses amis. Il est fort probable qu'Érasme a dû fournir une liste, complétée par Maarten Dorp ou Adriaan Barland. L'ouvrage lui-même, d'un point de vue littéraire, est très limité; il s'agit de quatre feuillets qui contiennent une énumération de titres, avec des intertitres, sans plus.

L'œuvre lexicographique attribuée à Dirk Martens se limite à deux œuvres, qui sont des rééditions aménagées d'œuvres antérieures.

Le premier ouvrage lexicographique est une refonte d'un dictionnaire latin-néerlandais très populaire, la *Gemmula vocabulorum*, dont la première impression date de 1484 à Anvers, chez Gheraert Leeu, c'est-à-dire dans l'atelier dont Martens reprend la succession.<sup>39</sup> C'est en 1494 que Dirk Martens entreprend d'éditer une version corrigée et enrichie de près de deux mille termes (d'où le changement dans le titre de *gemmula* en *gemma*).

chapitres XV et XVI: Van Iseghem, pp. 142–65.

<sup>37</sup> Le premier catalogue de l'œuvre d'Érasme se trouve dans une lettre d'Adriaan Barland adressée à son frère vers novembre 1516, et publiée pour la première fois dans les *Aliquot epistolae sane quam elegantes* d'avril 1517, cf. Allen II, Ep. 492. Le deuxième catalogue est publié en 1519, alors qu'Érasme a produit seulement 36 éditions princeps, c'est-à-dire même pas le cinquième de son œuvre! Sur le catalogue de 1519, cf. Hoffmann, *Das Verzeichniss der Schriften des Desiderius Erasmus*, et la notice de Marie-Thérèse Lenger dans le catalogue, Bruxelles 1969, pp. 28–30, n. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Allen III, Ep. 870. 8–9, Louvain, 17 octobre 1518.

<sup>39</sup> Polain 1562. La *Gemmula* était elle-même une adaptation du *Vocabularius ex quo*, dictionnaire très populaire dans les pays germaniques au xv<sup>e</sup> siècle. Cf. la notice de Kamiel Heireman sur la *Gemma* dans le catalogue sur *Le Cinquième centenaire de l'imprimerie dans les anciens Pays-Bas*, pp. 124–26, n. 62.

On y trouve au verso un avis au lecteur qui explique qu'après avoir examiné la *Gemmula vocabulorum*, et constaté qu'elle était remplie de fautes, on a décidé d'exécuter une refonte de l'ouvrage en l'augmentant d'extraits des meilleurs auteurs ('et multa præterea ex optimis auctoribus addidimus') (cf. annexe, texte 1).<sup>40</sup> La liste des auteurs cités est éloquente. Son contenu témoigne de la culture de son auteur: érudite et au fait des dernières publications dans le domaine. Elle contient des lexicographes tant anciens que modernes: Festus Pompeius (II<sup>e</sup> siècle), Nonius Marcellus (IV<sup>e</sup> siècle), Aulu-Gelle (II<sup>e</sup> siècle), M. Junianus Justinus (IV<sup>e</sup> siècle), et, parmi les modernes: Dionysius Nestor (*Onomasticon*, 1483) et Nicolò Perotti (*Cornucopia*).

L'avis signale qu'on a joint à la *Gemma* une liste alphabétique des prénoms que l'on rencontre le plus souvent, en poésie ou dans les livres d'histoire, des noms d'hommes célèbres, de villes et de régions, de montagnes et de rivières. Il s'agit de la liste de Giovanni Aretino Tortelli présente dans le *De Orthographia* (ouvrage publié à Trévise chez Gérard de Lisa en 1477).<sup>41</sup>

L'avis n'est pas signé par Dirk Martens. Tous les biographes de l'imprimeur lui ont attribué d'autorité la paternité de ce travail, inscrivant Dirk Martens dans une lignée qui, passant par les Estienne, aboutit au travail lexicographique de Kiliaan chez Plantin.

Pour notre part, nous estimons vraiment surprenant qu'un érudit, qui maîtrise les textes des lexicographes antiques et contemporains, publie un premier dictionnaire en 1494, âgé déjà de 47–48 ans, puis ne produise plus aucun travail dans ce domaine jusqu'à son décès en 1532.

\* \* \*

Le second travail qu'on lui attribue est un dictionnaire hébraïque,<sup>42</sup> réduction au format in-quarto de l'ouvrage in-folio *Rudimenta Hebraica* de Johann Reuchlin, paru à Hagenau chez Thomas Anshelm en 1506.

<sup>40</sup> Nous remercions Renaud Adam de nous avoir transmis sa documentation sur cet ouvrage, que nous avons jusqu'alors pu consulter seulement dans l'édition de 1495 de Richard Paffraet à Deventer, dans l'exemplaire conservé à Wolfenbüttel, HAB, inkunabeln/kg-371-1. L'avis n'y est pas reproduit au verso de la page de titre, comme chez Martens, mais sur le recto du second folio. Le texte de l'édition de Paffraet correspond au texte donné par Martens, à une phrase près: la mention de la liste de mots a été omise.

<sup>41</sup> *Propria nomina clarorum hominum, populorum, urbium, provinciarum, montium ac fluviorum magis insignium ex Iohanne Tortellio.*

<sup>42</sup> *Dictionarium Hebraicum.*



Dans la lettre qu'il signe au verso de la page de titre (cf. annexe, texte 17), Dirk Martens s'adresse à 'ses jeunes lecteurs', et leur signale qu'il a abrégé et réduit les racines ou les mots primitifs de la langue hébraïque, que Reuchlin a recueillis avec soin et expliqués. Il reconnaît s'être presque toujours servi de sa traduction, ne désirant pas 'vouloir faire de l'esprit avec l'ouvrage d'autrui'.

Cette adresse au lecteur est le seul document qui témoigne de la connaissance de l'hébreu par Dirk Martens. Il est donc difficile d'admettre qu'il ait été hébraïsant, comme on l'a souvent écrit. Ici aussi, il est peu probable que l'imprimeur soit l'auteur de ce dictionnaire. Il est plus vraisemblable que l'adaptation de l'ouvrage de Reuchlin a été confiée à l'un des savants de l'université de Louvain, tel Jan van Campen (Campensis), qui enseignait l'hébreu au *Collegium trilingue*.

Bien qu'il soit répété partout que Dirk Martens est l'auteur de ces deux œuvres lexicographiques, leur attribution doit être remise en question. Dans les deux cas, elles apparaissent comme des hapax. Rien n'explique leur apparition dans le cours de la carrière de Dirk Martens, et l'on ne trouve aucun écho ou poursuite de tels travaux après leur parution. Ces deux dictionnaires supposent un labeur érudit important, dont on ne trouve aucune trace dans les témoignages conservés sur l'imprimeur alostois.

Ce dictionnaire est cité par Valère André, puis par Jean-François Foppens. De façon significative, Valère André ne mentionne pas qu'il a écrit (*scripsit*), comme pour les hymnes et le dialogue, ou, composé (*composuit*). Valère André emploie simplement *dedit*, il a 'édité' un dictionnaire hébraïque.<sup>43</sup>

Le dernier biographe important de Dirk Martens, Kamiel Heireman, illustre bien cette difficulté à extraire Dirk Martens de la légende qui en a fait un imprimeur savant humaniste au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans le contexte de l'émergence des histoires nationales qui mettaient en valeur leurs 'Grands Hommes'. C'est Kamiel Heireman qui a esquissé cette lignée savante (Martens-Estienne-Kiliaan) dans sa notice de la *Gemma*, dans le catalogue de l'exposition de Bruxelles en 1973 (p. 126). Bien qu'il continue à diffuser cette image d'un imprimeur-éditeur savant universel dans le catalogue de l'exposition d'Alost dont il avait la responsabilité,<sup>44</sup> son approche scientifique l'oblige à nuancer sa position et à admettre que la véritable valeur de Martens ne se trouve pas dans ses contri-

<sup>43</sup> La mention de Valère André dans sa notice est la suivante: 'Dedit & *Dictionarium Hebraicum*, sive Enchiridion radicum seu dictionum Hebraicum, ex Ioan. Reuchlino, in 4<sup>o</sup> absque loci aut typographi nomine'.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. notamment le catalogue d'Alost 1973, p. 21: 'Hij is het type van de veelzijdige, humanistische, geleerde drukker-uitgever en is daarom ook vanzelfsprekend Europees gericht'.

butions savantes qui, comparées à celles d'autres imprimeurs comme Badius, Estienne, Manuce, sont minimes.<sup>45</sup>

Les travaux récents de Renaud Adam ont bien montré la construction idéologique qui avait fait de Dirk Martens le prototypographe des Pays-Bas au détriment de Jean de Westphalie; nous pensons qu'il faut aller plus loin encore, et lui retirer les travaux savants que l'historiographie nationaliste lui a attribués, et dont il n'est manifestement pas l'auteur.

Après le catalogue et les deux dictionnaires, considérons maintenant les lettres de l'imprimeur. Après l'avis (non signé) de 1494, il faut attendre le 29 juin 1507, et la publication d'un lexique de l'Anglais Johannes Garlandia (XIII<sup>e</sup> s.), pour trouver une première lettre signée par le 'libraire Dirk Martens' (cf. annexe, texte 2).<sup>46</sup> Puis, octobre 1513 pour retrouver une seconde lettre signée par Dirk Martens dans un ouvrage juridique (cf. annexe, texte 3).

La première lettre de l'imprimeur alostois est donc rédigée quand il a soixante ans, et déjà publié 59 éditions! Il est vraiment surprenant qu'un imprimeur humaniste rédige sa première lettre à l'âge où beaucoup de ses contemporains sont décédés. Il y a des vocations tardives, mais la naissance de Dirk Martens comme auteur à l'âge de soixante ans est inattendue.

Dans ses 289 éditions, Dirk Martens a signé seize lettres d'imprimeur. C'est peu. Compte tenu de sa longue activité professionnelle (1473–1529), ces lettres se répartissent sur une courte période de sept années (1513–20). Leur style est homogène, à l'exception de la première, qui préface le recueil de Justinien. Celle-ci est rédigée par quelqu'un qui use et abuse de l'emploi des superlatifs; cinq superlatifs se trouvent dans les quatre premières lignes ('summi, honestissimi, doctissimus, absolutissimus, sanctissimarum'). La construction des phrases est longue et complexe. La première, en particulier, est fort étirée. Remarquons, par exemple, la façon dont le *cum* historique introduit pas moins de cinq subjonctifs ('dictasset, recollegissent, recognovisset, probasset, conspiceret'), avec en plus

<sup>45</sup> Kamiel Heireman établit cette lignée savante dans sa notice de la *Gemma*, in *Le Cinquième centenaire de l'imprimerie dans les anciens Pays-Bas*, p. 126. Bien qu'il continue à diffuser cette image d'un imprimeur-éditeur savant, universel, dans le catalogue d'Alost 1973, p. 21, il lui arrive d'être plus nuancé (p. 20: 'Wil men de eigen waarde van Martens peilen dan zal men die niet moeten zoeken in de zuiver wetenschappelijke bijdrage. Die is bij hem, zelfs vergeleken met die van andere drukkers als Badius, Estienne, Manutius, gering geweest').

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Joannes de Garlandia, *Multorum vocabulorum equivocorum interpretatio*. On trouve au verso de la page de titre, f. [a]<sup>r</sup>: 'Theodoricus Martini Alostensem Bibliopola Antverpiensis adolescentibus studiosis in Anglia. Salutem'.

une proposition finale introduite par *quo*, incise dans cette même subordonnée, après laquelle apparaît enfin le verbe principal *duxit*. Cette lettre n'a rien du style des autres lettres, qu'Alphonse F. Van Iseghem trouvait: 'aussi pur et aussi coulant que celui d'Érasme'.<sup>47</sup>

En signe de clin d'œil au père Van Iseghem, on fera remarquer que douze de ces seize lettres se trouvent dans des éditions érasmiennes, ce qui permet de mieux comprendre le 'style érasmien' des lettres signées par Dirk Martens [...] Sur les douze éditions érasmiennes, onze sont des éditions princeps, imprimées quand Érasme travaille à Louvain, dans l'officine, aux côtés de l'imprimeur. Les quatre lettres publiées dans des éditions non érasmiennes sont les ouvrages suivants : en 1513, le compendium de Justinien déjà cité; en 1518, une édition d'Aristophane (cf. annexe, texte 11) et une autre de Prudence (cf. annexe, texte 13); et, en 1520, son *Dictionarium hebraicum*.

Faisons un détour maintenant par la correspondance d'Érasme, pour tenter d'y trouver des traces de l'activité savante de Dirk Martens. Il y a une trentaine de citations du nom de Dirk Martens dans la correspondance éditée par Percy Stafford Allen, mais aucune lettre directe entre les deux hommes.

Les seules informations que nous aurions pu retirer de la collaboration entre Érasme et Martens lors des années 1503–04 se trouvent dans les dédicaces de l'humaniste. Celles-ci, malheureusement, n'évoquent jamais l'imprimeur.

L'imprimeur est cité en passant par nombre de correspondants dans les années 1517 à 1521, quand Érasme réside à Louvain, mais Érasme, de son côté, ne le cite que fortuitement. En 1517, il fait reporter l'impression d'une coquille dans une lettre de Budé sur l'incurie du typographe (Martens), le seul dont il dispose à Louvain (Allen II, Ep. 531. 524–26, Érasme à Guillaume Budé, Anvers, le 15 février 1517: 'De tuis epistolis mendosius excusis non iniuria expostulas. Nam idem mihi quoque non mediocriter stomachum moverat; sed unicum hunc habemus τυπογράφον καὶ τοῦτόν γε ἄξιον ἡμῶν').

Dans une lettre à Beatus, <vers le 15 octobre> 1518, Érasme lui rapporte que, malade, il ne pouvait se rendre chez lui (il résidait au Collège du Lys), car on avait fait courir le bruit qu'il était pestiféré. Il s'isole alors chez Dirk Martens, 'un ami tellement loyal qu'avec lui seul je pourrais être pleinement heureux, si du moins ses moyens financiers pouvaient correspondre à ses sentiments' (Allen III, Ep. 867. 195–97: 'Ad Theodoricum typographum diverto, amicum tam since-

<sup>47</sup> Van Iseghem, p. 143.

rum ut vel hoc uno beatus sim futurus, si res animo responderet'). Il demeure en convalescence pendant quatre semaines chez l'imprimeur.

Dans une autre lettre le 6 décembre <1517> à Beatus Rhenanus, traité ici comme le représentant des intérêts de la Maison Froben, Érasme prend la défense de Dirk Martens à qui il a confié la princeps de la paraphrase de Paul aux Romains. Il écrit qu'il ne faut pas en vouloir à ce 'pauvre petit homme' (*pauperculus*), car il l'empêche de nuire aux Bâlois. Quand il était en Angleterre, Martens avait imprimé à son insu l'*Institutio principis Christiani*, ce qu'il lui a reproché.<sup>48</sup>

Plusieurs mentions de l'imprimeur apparaissent encore dans le contexte de la polémique avec Edward Lee.

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Dans cet ensemble de lettres, la plupart de celles qui évoquent Dirk Martens sont écrites par les correspondants d'Érasme, et non par l'humaniste. Le théologien Maarten Dorpius et le professeur au *Collegium trilingue*, Conradus Goclenius, jouent un rôle d'intercesseurs entre l'humaniste et l'imprimeur. Dirk Martens apparaît dans ces échanges épistolaires comme un homme de confiance pour le Rotterdamois et un ami fidèle qui ne craint pas d'héberger Érasme,<sup>49</sup> même quand les médecins diagnostiquent la peste. Leur relation semble ténue dans les années 1503–04, puis plus intense, jusqu'à ce qu'ils deviennent intimes dans les années 1516–21; mais aucun témoignage n'évoque un échange intellectuel entre les deux hommes.

La relation entre Érasme et Dirk Martens est pareille à celle qui unit Froben au Rotterdamois. Érasme s'attache à ses deux imprimeurs, entièrement à son service. Des liens d'amitié naissent à la suite de ces relations professionnelles suivies, mais ni le Bâlois, ni l'Alostois ne jouent un rôle intellectuel dans le développement de l'œuvre d'Érasme. Tous deux sont des imprimeurs humanistes (par la nature de leur production), mais pas des humanistes imprimeurs.

<sup>48</sup> Allen III, Ep. 732. 15–24, Érasme à Beatus Rhenanus, Louvain (6 décembre 1517): 'Paraphrasin eram missurus Basileam, libellum ut coniectabam vendibilem. Ceterum cum viderem nihil omnino adferri, suspicabar eos esse plus satis oneratos; itaque commisi huic nostro. Mitto et nunc exemplar a me utcumque recognitum. Verum incivile sit statim æmulari quod hic pauperculus excudit, qui nihil umquam excudit ab istis excusum præter libellum de Principe, quem furtim excudit interim cum ego abessem in Anglia; quo nomine hominem obiurgavi. Et sedulo ago ne quid officiat Basiliensibus; me certe auctore non faciet'.

<sup>49</sup> Dans une lettre à Pieter Gillis, Érasme lui demande de lui faire parvenir des gobelets d'or par l'entremise de Dirk Martens, ce qui suppose qu'il lui accordait une grande confiance (Allen III, Ep. 637. 20).

Dans sa notice au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Valère André signale que Dirk Martens était savant (*doctus*), et à ce titre loué par Érasme, Barland et d'autres personnages célèbres à l'époque à Louvain.<sup>50</sup> Nous n'avons trouvé aucune trace de tels éloges insistant sur le caractère savant de l'imprimeur dans les textes d'Érasme ou d'Adriaan Barland ...

Venons-en maintenant aux lettres de l'imprimeur alostois.

### 3. Les lettres de l'imprimeur Dirk Martens d'Alost

Si l'on exclut l'avis non signé de la *Gemma vocabulorum* de 1494, dix-neuf livres de Dirk Martens contiennent des avis au lecteur, pour vingt lettres.<sup>51</sup>

Un avis date de la période anversoise (dans l'ouvrage de Jean de Garlandes en 1507), dix-neuf ont été rédigés à Louvain de 1513 à 1521.<sup>52</sup> La 'lettre anversoise' est la seule où Dirk Martens se présente comme libraire, et non comme imprimeur. C'est aussi la seule édition exécutée aux frais de deux autres personnes, qui signent l'ouvrage à leur nom sur la page de titre.<sup>53</sup> Ces lettres se trouvent majoritairement dans des éditions d'Érasme (quinze sur dix-neuf).

La typologie et le contenu des lettres de Dirk Martens diffèrent de ce qui est observable chez Johann Froben.

On ne retrouve pas de 'lettre technique', à moins qu'on ne range sous cette catégorie les lettres qui introduisent des errata (annexe, texte 7). À la différence de l'officine frobenienne, aucune lettre ne donne des indications sur les problèmes philologiques rencontrés dans l'établissement des textes. Pas de lettre non plus qui affirme le privilège de l'imprimeur sur une édition. On ne trouve pas non plus de véritable 'lettre titre',<sup>54</sup> ou 'lettre sommaire'.

<sup>50</sup> Le début de la notice de Valère André est: 'THEODORICUS MARTINUS, Alostensis, in infantia Academia Lovaniensis Typographus, vir & diligens artisque suæ peritus, & doctus, eoque nomine Des. Erasmo, Adr. Barlando, aliisque Lovanii'.

<sup>51</sup> L'*Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem* contient deux avis au lecteur.

<sup>52</sup> Un avis en 1513, 1515 et 1516; quatre en 1517; cinq en 1518; trois en 1519 et 1520; et un en 1521.

<sup>53</sup> C'est l'avis de Dirk Martens à l'intérieur de l'ouvrage qui a permis d'attribuer cette édition à l'imprimeur alostois. Cette édition avait échappé à Alphonse F. Van Iseghem, cf. Nijhoff et Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche Bibliographie*, p. 3264.

<sup>54</sup> On trouve parfois un avis au lecteur sur la page de titre, cf. l'édition de la *Moria* en 1512: 'Moriae encomium Erasmi Roterodami declamatio. Ad lectorem. Habes hic lector laudem

Par contre, il y a profusion de ‘lettres de réclame’, dans lesquelles l’imprimeur joue au bateleur afin de mettre en valeur sa marchandise.

Dans un cas, Dirk Martens réutilise une adresse au lecteur signée précédemment par Johann Froben.<sup>55</sup>

\* \* \*

La différence la plus marquante entre les lettres des deux imprimeurs est le public auquel ils s’adressent. Bien que vivant dans une grande ville universitaire et travaillant avec de nombreux membres de cette institution, Johann Froben ne s’adresse presque jamais directement à celle-ci, privilégiant le public de la *Respublica litteraria*. L’officine bâloise s’adresse au monde, plus qu’à sa cité, et porte l’honneur de la nation germanique au loin. Ce n’est pas le cas de l’officine de Dirk Martens, dont le rayonnement commercial est plus limité. Le public de l’imprimeur alos-tois est principalement celui de l’Université de Louvain.

Sa première véritable lettre en tant qu’imprimeur, en 1513, alors qu’il vient de s’établir à Louvain, face à l’École de droit civil,<sup>56</sup> se trouve dans un ouvrage juridique et est adressée aux étudiants en droit, qui n’avaient qu’à traverser la rue pour faire leurs emplettes. L’ouvrage est le résultat de notes prises au cours du maître Nicolas de Bruxelles par ses étudiants. Avec cet ouvrage, Martens leur offre donc le ‘premier fruit de son travail’ (texte 3: ‘primum nostri laboris munusculum in vestro studio atque facultate vobis offero’), et se promet de leur en offrir d’autres s’ils acquièrent le premier.

La lettre qui se trouve dans la nouvelle édition d’Érasme des *Distiques moraux* du Pseudo-Caton contient au sujet de l’université des informations inédites. Si l’ouvrage n’est pas daté et ne possède pas de colophon, en revanche, l’adresse au lecteur de Dirk Martens porte le millésime de 1517.<sup>57</sup> Cette dernière contient

stultitiæ. Libellum oppido quam facetum ab Erasmo Roterodamo Germanorum decore concinnatum, in quo varii hominum status mire taxantur. Hunc tu si emeris et legeris, dispeream si non impendio gaudebis. Vale’. Le texte est suivi d’une gravure.

<sup>55</sup> Dirk Martens dans son édition de l’*Enchiridion* de 1520 (cf. annexe, texte 18), recopie la lettre de Johann Froben dans son édition de l’*Enchiridion* de 1519. Seule l’adresse et la souscription sont adaptées.

<sup>56</sup> À partir de 1512, on trouve la mention: *Venumdantur e regione scholæ Iuris Civilis in ædibus Theodorici Martini Alostensis*. Cf. Hugues de Saint Victor, *Questiones in epistolas Pauli*.

<sup>57</sup> Les différentes adresses au lecteur contenues dans les *Catonis disticha moralia*, sont les suivantes: Dirk Martens au lecteur, f. A. ii<sup>r</sup>–A. ii<sup>v</sup>: *Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis bonarum litterarum studiosus S.D. (Lovanii. An. M. D. XVII.)*. Incipit: *Si non sine causa; Mimi Publiani*: Érasme au lecteur (Allen III, Ep. 678): f. F. i<sup>r</sup>: *Erasmus Roterodamus lectori S.D. (s.d.)*. Incipit: *In*

un éloge du Collège des Trois Langues de Louvain, alors qu'il n'a pas encore ouvert ses portes! Hieronymus Busleyden avait créé par testament, le 22 juin 1517, une série de bourses à Louvain afin d'enseigner le latin, le grec et l'hébreu. Il était décédé le 27 août. On donna des leçons dès 1518, mais le collège s'érigea seulement en octobre 1520 sur le marché au poisson (Vismarkt). On sait combien le rôle d'Érasme fut décisif dans le lancement de ce collège humaniste. Il est donc frappant, au début d'une nouvelle édition princeps du Rotterdamois, de trouver un tel éloge qui s'assimile à un document d'actualité annonçant de façon anticipée la création de ce collège. L'Université de Louvain, grâce au *Collegium Trilingue*, surpasse toutes les autres car elle 'possède trois hommes spéciaux pour l'enseignement respectif des trois langues anciennes' (ill. 1, texte 8: 'quod una omnium tres exhibeat, qui singuli singulas linguas profiteantur, Græcam, Hebraicam et Latinam'), et dispense cet enseignement gratuitement, grâce au legs de Busleyden.

L'officine de Dirk Martens veillera à toujours signaler qu'elle est également à la pointe du progrès, car tout comme le collège, elle est *trilinguis*. Elle ne le cède à personne pour ce qui est des éditions latines, a peu de concurrents pour le grec, et désire mériter les mêmes éloges pour l'hébreu (annexe, texte 12: 'In excudendis Latinis, nulli cedo, in Græcis, perpaucis, in Hebraicis ambimus similem laudem'). Remarquons au passage l'utilisation de la devise d'Érasme *Nulli cedo*, dans la profession de foi de l'imprimeur.

La même année, Dirk Martens s'adresse à ses *candidis lectoribus* pour leur signifier qu'il consacre ses faibles moyens à l'Université de Louvain (annexe, texte 9: 'Proinde nos quoque pro virili Lovaniensem Academiam, omni studiorum ac doctrinæ genere florentissimam, officina nostra qualicumque studemus adiuvere').

Dans son édition d'Aristophane de 1518, il commence sa lettre en faisant remarquer que la plupart des imprimeurs dédient leurs publications aux gens importants ou à leurs amis, mais que lui a décidé de dédier toutes ses productions aux jeunes étudiants de l'Université (annexe, texte 11: 'Ceteri fere chalcographi fœtus officinarum suarum aut magnatibus dedicant, aut egregie caris inscribunt. Mihi quoniam nihil antiquius est, quam huius Academiae florentissimæ studiis

*hos depravatissime scriptos; Institutum hominis christiani*: Érasme au lecteur (Allen III, Ep. 679 (Louvain, 1517)): f. I. ii<sup>r</sup>: *Erasmus Roterodamus lectori S.D.* (s.d.). Incipit: *Fac memineris lector quæ*; Isocrates: Érasme au lecteur (Allen III, Ep. 677 (Louvain, 1517)): f. K. ii<sup>r</sup>: *Erasmus lectori*. (s.d.). Incipit: *Hunc libellum denuo contulimus*; Eucharius: Érasme à Allard d'Amsterdam (Allen III, Ep. 676; Louvain): f. M. iv<sup>r</sup>–M. ii<sup>r</sup>: *Erasmus Roterodamus Alardo Amstelredamo doctiss. liberalium artium professori S.D.* (s.d.). Incipit: *Libellus quem misisti cum*.



pro virili consulere, quicquid ars nostra produxerit, id omne vobis optimi iuvenes dicare certum est').

Parfois il s'adresse aux étudiants de l'Université dans son ensemble (annexe, texte 11: *studiosa Lovaniensis Academiae iuventuti*), parfois à eux d'une faculté particulière, le droit comme nous l'avons vu (texte 3), ou à celle des Arts (ill. 1, texte 13: *bonarum litterarum studiosis S. D.*).

\* \* \*

Comme dans les lettres de 'Johann Froben', nous retrouvons fréquemment une injonction à la fin de l'épître pour acheter l'ouvrage. Chez Dirk Martens, le thème se double d'un appel au patriotisme. La lettre que l'on trouve à la fin de la *Ratio* d'Érasme en novembre 1518 est de ce point de vue exemplaire. L'extrait suivant témoigne du ressentiment de Dirk Martens à l'égard de la réputation d'excellence accordée aux productions venant de l'étranger, au détriment des réalisations locales (annexe, texte 14):

Dirk Martens d'Alost au lecteur bienveillant, salut.

J'ai souvent remarqué que les hommes en général ne font pas que de ce qu'on leur présente comme venant de l'étranger et importé de fort loin. C'est ainsi que nous admirons le morceau de tuf ou la branche d'arbre que nous croyons avoir été apportés de Jérusalem, et qu'on a ramassés au bord de la mer dans notre propre pays. Nous estimons les médicaments qui nous arrivent de l'extrémité des Indes ; et des remèdes plus efficaces naissent parmi les plantes de nos jardins. De même Parménion, dans Térence, rehausse le prix de son esclave, en disant: 'Elle vient du fond de l'Éthiopie'. Les savants du moins devraient être exempts de ce préjugé; et cependant parmi eux encore il s'en trouve qui ne louent un auteur et ne paient bien son livre que lorsqu'il est imprimé dans un pays lointain. Quoi de plus injuste, que dis-je, quoi de plus insensé? La prospérité de notre industrie nous porte-t-elle ombrage à ce point? Il y a des peuples qui n'estiment que ce qui se fait chez eux: nous, au contraire, nous n'attachons de prix qu'à ce qu'on fabrique à l'étranger.<sup>58</sup>

La suite de la lettre est plus directe, et sonne étrangement au début d'un ouvrage d'Érasme, car elle dévalorise l'importance de Bâle par rapport à Louvain:

L'université de Bâle, si peu fréquentée, si morte, en comparaison de celle de Louvain, nourrit une foule d'imprimeurs; et la nôtre, qui n'a de rivale que celle de Paris, fait difficulté d'en nourrir un seul!

<sup>58</sup> Nous utilisons la belle traduction de Van Iseghem, pp. 158–60.



La comparaison entre la fréquentation de Louvain et celle de Paris se retrouve dans une lettre d'Érasme à Daniel Tayspil, écrite d'Anderlecht le 5 juillet 1521 (Allen IV, Ep. 1221. 10–12: 'Academia Lovaniensis frequentia nulli cedit hodie præterquam Parisinæ. Numerus est plus minus tria milia, et adfluunt cottidie plures').

La fin de la lettre insiste sur le désarroi de l'imprimeur, qui ne peut se contenter de louanges, comme le fait un auteur, pour faire vivre sa famille:

Tous les pays du monde entretiennent leurs industriels; le nôtre seul fait exception. En vérité, cela ne peut continuer ainsi; il faut qu'on s'entraide. Un auteur ne cherche qu'un lecteur admiratif; moi je cherche un acheteur. C'est être ingrat, que de se contenter de louer un livre; c'est l'être bien davantage que d'en empêcher la vente par d'injustes critiques. D'autres s'enrichissent en imprimant de mauvais ouvrages, et moi, qui n'en imprime que de bons, j'ai bien de la peine à nourrir ma famille, tout en vivant avec la plus stricte économie. Cependant rien ne sort de mes presses qui ne procure un plus grand gain à l'acheteur qu'au vendeur. Achetez donc, et vous agirez pour l'avantage de l'un et de l'autre. Adieu.

Il n'est pas étonnant de trouver régulièrement un éloge du format portable des livres dans une officine qui s'est consacrée presque exclusivement à l'impression de petit format. Sur une production de 289 items, dont le format est connu pour rappelons le 272 livres, pas moins de 223 livres sont des in-quarto, des in-octavo ou des in-sextodecimo.<sup>59</sup> Dirk Martens justifie l'utilisation de petits formats par le prix des grands formats, qui interdit leur achat à de nombreuses personnes, et l'encombrement de ceux-ci qui ne permet pas de les lire partout (texte 6: 'Quoniam perpendebam non omnibus suppetere, unde sibi magna volumina redimant, aut si suppetit, incommodum est circumferre').

Sur la page de titre des *Parabolæ* d'Érasme en 1520, l'imprimeur proclame qu'il a choisi délibérément ce petit format, afin que le livre soit plus commode à transporter; ainsi, les étudiants en feront un compagnon qu'ils emporteront partout et à toute heure (annexe, texte 19: 'libellum [...] quem in enchiridii formam hac sane gratia contraximus, ut commodior sit gestatu, studiosisque comes individuus adhæreat domi, foris, otiantibus, peregrinantibus, sive reptent, sive deambulent').

\* \* \*

À l'instar de ce qu'on trouve chez Froben, Martens propage l'idée très érasmiennne de mêler piété et érudition. Ainsi en 1517, à la fin de la *Paraphrasis in Pauli epis-*

<sup>59</sup> Le détail des formats utilisés dans l'officine se décompose comme suit: 8 in-plano, 12 in f°, 199 in-4°, 30 in 8°, et 3 in 16°.

*tolam ad Romanos*, il insiste sur sa volonté de proposer aux étudiants de Louvain des livres qui ont le double avantage de mener à une vie pieuse et érudite, tout en contenant le moins de fautes (ill. 1, texte 9: 'primum et ad vitam instituendam, et ad eruditionem comparandam idonei, deinde quam minime mendosi').

Ce thème de la piété lui est cher. Sous forme de clin d'œil, il présentera même un *erratum* en accordant aux étudiants sa 'bénédiction typographique' (annexe, texte 20: 'studiosis salutem, et typographicam benedictionem').

Les lettres que nous évoquons ici ont été écrites pour la plupart entre 1517 et 1521, c'est-à-dire à une époque particulièrement troublée aux Pays-Bas, entre l'apparition publique de Luther et l'arrestation de ceux qui allaient devenir les premiers martyrs réformés.<sup>60</sup>

En 1520 a lieu un différend intéressant entre Martens et Érasme. Dans une lettre qu'il adresse à Adriaan Barland, l'humaniste nous apprend qu'il a conseillé à l'imprimeur de publier le livre d'un théologien de Louvain (Jan Driedo), qui réfutait les thèses de Luther, non par des vociférations, mais en s'appuyant sur des preuves solides. Le refus de Dirk Martens d'imprimer un ouvrage contre le réformateur semble indiquer que l'imprimeur avait alors des sympathies luthériennes, ce que confirme un autre événement rapporté par Cornelis Reedijk.<sup>61</sup>

Le 27 juin 1521, Girolamo Aleandro envoie de Louvain au cardinal Giulio de' Medici (futur Clément VII), encore vice-chancelier de Léon X, une lettre en italien qui accompagne un exemplaire de l'Édit de Worms imprimé par Dirk Martens.<sup>62</sup>

Dans le dernier paragraphe de sa lettre, Aleandro écrit:

J'ai passé neuf jours à Louvain; tout y marche bien. L'Université orthodoxe d'ici est aux pieds de Sa Sainteté, à Laquelle elle se recommande. J'ai donné les ordres nécessaires; qu'ils n'aient pas été exécutés plus vite est dû à l'imprimeur qui, à court de caractères, n'a pu composer qu'une forme par jour et, comme il n'avait pas de correcteurs, je me suis vu contraint de corriger moi-même. Chez l'imprimeur en question j'ai fait confisquer naguère par voie judiciaire un grand nombre de livres de Luther; peut-être est-ce pour cela qu'il m'a contrecarré maintenant et, pour

<sup>60</sup> Le prieur des moines augustins d'Anvers, favorable à Luther, Jacques Præpositus, fut convoqué et incarcéré par l'inquisiteur général à Bruxelles le 5 décembre 1521, cf. Brackman, *Le Protestantisme Belge*, pp. 51–59.

<sup>61</sup> Reedijk, 'Érasme, Thierry Martens et le Julius exclusus', pp. 360–62.

<sup>62</sup> Un seul exemplaire a survécu au Vatican, cf. Nijhoff et Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche Bibliographie*, p. 3298. Pour la lettre, cf. *Corpus documentorum Inquisitionis hereticae*, éd. par Fredericq, v, 400–01, n. 756 (49bis); cité par Reedijk, 'Érasme, Thierry Martens et le Julius exclusus', n. 47.

gagner davantage, qu'il a imprimé l'édit sur cinq feuilles, quoique trois eussent suffi. Au reste, c'est un homme honnête qui a certainement retrouvé la bonne voie, dont il s'était écarté avant, sous l'influence de qui vous savez, celui qui a putréfié tout ce pays de Flandre. Mais arrêtons là pour le moment, car j'espère en parler avec vous plus longuement [...]

Nulle doute qu'Aleandro songe à Érasme quand il évoque celui *che aputrefatto tutta questa Fiandra*.

Il est significatif (et amusant) d'observer le sabotage muet de l'imprimeur, qui oblige le légat du pape auprès de l'empereur à officier comme correcteur et utilise une trop grande quantité de papier pour imprimer l'édit.<sup>63</sup>

\* \* \*

Dans une seule lettre, Dirk Martens donne une information sur la composition d'un texte par Érasme. Sur la page de titre de l'apologie contre Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, il ne manque pas de souligner que le texte plaira bien davantage encore au futur acheteur, quand il saura que l'humaniste l'a commencé et achevé dans le temps record de douze jours (texte 10: 'magis placitura sit, si scias, id quod nobis constat, opus hoc illi intra duodecim dies, et cœptum et absolutum').

Dans une autre lettre, fortuitement, au détour d'une phrase, surgit un portrait de l'imprimeur: [c'est cette piété] 'que moi, vieillard aux cheveux blancs, à la peau ridée après tant de travaux d'une longue carrière, c'est elle que je recherche avant tout' (annexe, texte 13: 'Quam ego quoque iam senex multa canitie, et obrugata cute post tot exantlatos in omni vita labores ante omnia specto').

\* \* \*

Que conclure de tout cela? Cet ensemble de lettres a manifestement été rédigé par un homme érudit qui cite les bons auteurs, Aristote (annexe, texte 3), Hésiode, Platon (annexe, texte 8) ou Quintilien (annexe, texte 11). Cet érudit travaille à mettre en œuvre les fondements de la *Philosophia Christi* érasmiennne: *pietas* et *eruditio*. Mais qui est cet érudit? La disparité stylistique entre la lettre de 1513 (annexe, texte 3) et les lettres présentes dans les éditions érasmiennes, quand l'humaniste travaille à Louvain, est surprenante.

<sup>63</sup> Par ailleurs, Dirk Martens avait imprimé avant et après cet incident la *Tabula Græcarum musarum* de Girolamo Aleandro à trois reprises (Nijhoff et Kronenberg, *Nederlandsche Bibliographie*, pp. 2274, 67, 2275). La première édition en 1516 est le premier livre entièrement en grec imprimé par Dirk Martens.

Dans le chapitre précédent, on a montré qu'il convenait fort probablement de retirer à Dirk Martens les œuvres qui lui sont généralement attribuées (la *Gemma*, le *Dictionarium Hebraicum*, le catalogue des œuvres d'Érasme), et que sa réputation d'imprimeur savant était née seulement au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, avant d'être reprise *crescendo* par tous les biographes de l'imprimeur, sur la base de prétendus témoignages dans la littérature ancienne qu'il ne nous a pas été donné de retrouver [...] Ses études latines reposent également sur des suppositions et non sur des faits. Doit-on imaginer que Dirk Martens, comme Johann Froben, n'est pas l'auteur des lettres qu'il signe dans ses livres? Le doute est permis.

Chez Dirk Martens, comme chez Froben, une éclosion tardive de leur vocation humaniste s'observe dans leur carrière. À Bâle, Johann Froben attend cinquante-trois ans pour imprimer des œuvres humanistes et se conformer au portrait transmis par la postérité. Il en va de même pour l'imprimeur alostois. Le rêve humaniste de Dirk Martens est un rêve de vieillard, 'aux cheveux blancs et à la peau ridée [...]':

Quand Érasme quitte Louvain, Dirk Martens s'arrête d'écrire, soudainement. Les 34 éditions qu'il imprime de 1522 à 1529 ne possèdent pas une seule lettre signée de son nom. C'est troublant.

\* \* \*

Nous sommes un peu désolé de terminer ce travail par cette entreprise de 'démystification' de Dirk Martens, car nous l'avions entamé en lisant le beau livre de Cornelis Reedijk sur l'amitié entre l'humaniste et 'onze Dirk',<sup>64</sup> et la biographie enthousiaste d'Alphonse F. Van Iseghem. Nous désirions rendre justice à 'l'atelier d'Érasme' en définissant le rôle de ses imprimeurs dans le développement intellectuel de son œuvre.

Dans le débat entre art mécanique et art libéral à la Renaissance, nous trouvions l'attitude d'Érasme fort hautaine quand il évoquait des artistes tels Albrecht Dürer ou Hans Holbein. Nous pensions pouvoir redonner une juste place à ces 'artisans' imprimeurs.

Malheureusement, on ne fait pas de la recherche avec de bonnes intentions ni pour raconter de belles histoires. Arrivé au port, il faut rendre à César ce qui lui appartient, et constater qu'Érasme, humaniste nordique, avait besoin d'inventer une figure qui n'existait pas encore dans les Pays-Bas, celle d'un imprimeur érudit, avec lequel on dialogue le soir, en flânant ou en se promenant ('sive reptent sive deambulent'). Un imprimeur comme il avait pu en côtoyer à Venise, avec qui l'on

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Reedijk, *Erasmus en onze Dirk*.

s'amuse à batailler en grec sur les sujets les plus divers, le soir, autour d'une table. Érasme, s'il n'a pas inventé seul cette figure de Dirk Martens comme imprimeur humaniste, l'a considérablement amplifiée en favorisant l'impression de ces lettres au lecteur.

Il conviendrait d'analyser d'un point de vue stylistique l'ensemble de ce corpus des lettres d'imprimeur, pour pouvoir attribuer à tel ou tel humaniste une lettre plutôt qu'une autre. Nous avouons ici notre incompétence, car il s'agit là d'un travail de philologue, et non d'historien d'art. Quand cela a été possible, nous avons essayé de donner le maximum de textes *in extenso*, afin que d'autres puissent poursuivre la recherche. Il est fort probable que la compréhension du fonctionnement de l'atelier bâlois sera bientôt renouvelée, grâce aux travaux autour de la correspondance de Beatus Rhenanus entrepris en Alsace par l'équipe de François Heim et de James Hirstein. Il est nécessaire d'effectuer un travail philologique approfondi, pour tenter d'aller plus avant dans la compréhension de l'atelier d'écriture autour des imprimeurs d'Érasme. Le Rotterdamois rédige plusieurs lettres pour ses imprimeurs, mais il n'est certainement pas le seul à tenir la plume de Froben ou de Martens.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> L'atelier de Dirk Martens, outre le Rotterdamois, doit sans doute comprendre les correcteurs qui sont nommés dans ses souscriptions à partir de 1501. Le premier nommé, dans un ouvrage de Beroalde, est le canoniste Jean de Luxembourg. En 1510, le secrétaire de la ville d'Anvers Pieter Gillis édite un ouvrage d'Ange Politien. En 1512, les professeurs de Louvain, Maarten Dorp, Nicolas de Bois-le-Duc et Pierre Barbier d'Arras. En 1515, Gérard de Nimègue et Adriaan Barland. À partir de 1516, apparaît le nom de Rutger Rescius, dans les éditions grecques. Sur les travaux édités par Pieter Gillis chez Dirk Martens, cf. la notice de Kamiel Heireman dans le catalogue d'Alost 1973, pp. 124–25; pour Gerard Geldenhouwer (Gerardus Noviomagus), pp. 177–78; et pour Barland, pp. 194–96.

*Annexe : Les épîtres au lecteur de Dirk Martens.*

(1)

*Gemma vocabulorum*, Anvers: Dirk Martens, 20 septembre 1494, in-4°, f. [a]<sup>v</sup>. Copinger, 6334; Goff, V-331; Van Iseghem, 29.

Inspiciens nuper vocabulorum gemmulam animadverti id esse verum, quod de isto libro a multis audieram. Utilem scilicet illum quidem rudioribus esse, sed multo tamen utiliore fore, si diligentius esset correctus et magis adauctus. Nam et multa scitu digna vocabula defuerunt, et pleraque in eo vel falso interpretata vel mendosissime scripta fuere, id quod cuivis litterato facile liquere poterat. Ut igitur publicæ consuleremus utilitati, plurimorum rogatu provinciam hanc laboriosam suscepimus, et opus ipsum de verbo ad verbum perlegentes, et inepta delevimus et depravata pro viribus correximus, et multa præterea ex optimis auctoribus addidimus, hoc est Festo Pompeio, Nonio Marcello, Aulo Gellio, Iuniano, Nestore et Perotto reliquisque permultis. Apposuimus postremo singulare alphabetum de propriis nominibus vel hominum illustrium vel urbium ac provinciarum vel montium ac fluviorum in poesi ac historiis maxime conducentium. At vero quanto præstet hoc opus illi priori, periti lectoris iudicio committimus, et id utriusque diligens lectio declarabit facile. Cum ergo hic liber optimus vocabulis non minus duobus milibus sit adauctus, eius quoque titulus merito videtur augendus, ut iam non gemmula sed rectius *Gemma vocabulorum* possit inscribi.

(2)

Joannes de Garlandia, *Multorum vocabulorum equiuocorum interpretatio*, Anvers: Dirk Martens aux frais de Jodocus Pelgrim et Henricus Jacobus, 1507, in-4°, f. [a]<sup>v</sup>. Alost 1973, M-60; NK, 3264.

Theodoricus Martini Alostensis bibliopola Antverpiensis adolescentibus studiosis in Anglia salutem.

Superioribus diebus vocabulorum æquivocorum interpretationem Magistri Iohannis de Garlandia grammatico et Latini cupido maiore quam existimarem labore recognovi suavissimi adolescentes. Nam cum noster Garlandianus suapte natura meridiana (ut dici solet) luce clarior appareat, arbitrabar ego conceptam recognitionem ullo absque labore exsequi. Verum inter tot mendosa atque obscura incidi, ut Lycophronis potius tenebras quam nostri Iohannis de Garlandia luciditatem ingredi viderer. Unde, collatis invicem aliquibus exemplaribus, maior adhuc et tædiosior labor additus est. Diversi enim codices diversos contextus et mendosos

quidem habebant: tanta est recentium impressorum incuria, ne dicam inscitia. Sed nihil tam arduum tamque difficile fuit quod labor improbus non vicerit, ut videlicet mei amicissimo Iudoco Pelgrim morem gererem optatissimum, qui cum in vestra excellentissima Angliæ patria et librorum sit fidelissimus mercator et amicorum suorum amantissimus, nullum umquam librum ex officina sua nisi perquam castigatum emittit. Eo autem libentius recognitionem nostram vobis dicendam censei, quod certe sciebam Iudoco Pelgrim rem non ingratam facturum. Præterea, ut res melius se haberet, accidit quod præclarissimus poeta laureatus ac regius Faustus Andrelinus collegium Parisiense poliens concessit mihi carmen de sancta eucharistia et de Virgine Christum crucifixum in gremio suo deflente; quod ut etiam adolescentiam vestram magis auget impressioni mandare curavi et in fine apposui. Quæ omnia castigata et in bonam formam redacta ab illo præclarissimo poeta invenietis. Sum brevi et alia grammaticalia nova familiaria Latinis castigatisque characteribus impressurus, ne tam divinis aliquorum grammaticorum monumentis careatis. Valete et Theodoricum Martini Alostensem librorum impressorem etiam atque etiam ametis. Ex mercuriali oppido Antverpiensi, III. kalendas Iunias.

## (3)

*Compendium quattuor librorum institutionum,*

Louvain: Dirk Martens, 13 octobre 1513, in-4°, f. A2<sup>r</sup>.

Alost 1973, M-93; NK, 1593; Van Iseghem, 72.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis iuris studiosis adolescentibus. Salutem D. P.

Aristotelis summi philosophi in Topicis sententia est adolescentes honestissimi: bonum eo divinius meliusque esse, quo communius atque diffusius. Hic certe factum esse non ambigo, ut optimus pater vester ac præceptor doctissimus et absolutissimus Magister Nicolaus de Bruxella litteralium artium sanctissimarumque legum doctor omni profecto laude nostra maior atque excellentior, cum isagogicum libellum in Institutiones Iustinianas quo ad eas primum et deinde ad totius iuris prudentiam optimo ductus consilio faciliorem pararet aditum, paucis sed eis quidem nobilibus honestisque adolescentulis consociis vestris voce tenus domi dicendo dictasset, ardentiusque ex eis nonnulli tam diligenter quam prudenter ab ore legentis recollegissent, oblatumque postmodum ipse præceptor recognovisset probassetque, quin etiam eorum quosdam ex eo supra quam dici queat profecisse conspiceret, non indignum duxit, ut nostro artificio ad omnium vestrum communem utilitatem in mille transfunderetur exempla. Ego itaque eodem animo ductus non sine vestri communis boni studiorumque vestrorum ratione acceptum ab eodem præceptore vestro exemplar artificio impressorio multiplicavi, multiplicatum quoque primum nostri laboris munusculum in vestro studio atque facultate vobis offero. Quod si non ingratam vobis nostram diligentiam ex hoc opusculo

probaverimus, plura maioraque eiusdem in ipsas institutiones non pænitenda opera a nobis non post multos menses percipietis, auctore duceque deo. Qui omni operi bono ut incohetur procedat finiaturque laudabiliter auctor duxque exsistit. In quo et vos valete felices. Lovanii ex nostra officina formularia, quinto Nonas Octobres anno a salute Christiana decimo tertio supra millesimum quingentesimum.

(4)

Érasme, *Enarratio in psalmum I 'Beatus vir', iuxta tropologiam potissimum*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, octobre 1515, in-4°, f. [a]<sup>r</sup>.

Alost 1973, A 257, pp. 185–86; NK, 814; Van Iseghem, 91.

Theo. Mar. Alustensis ad Studiosos.

Quo vestris non iam studiis modo, verum et crumenis consulam studiosi, (quod quotus est typographus qui faciat?), idcirco hæc vobis separatim impressimus, ut nummulo emi possint, nam quæ in Germania sunt his coimpressa, plurimos scio vestrum olim comparasse. Eadem denuo ob tantillam appendicis accessionem emere, vobis (si vos novi) grave foret. Omnes siquidem optimos libros vultis, vultis et multos, sed qui parvo constant. Atqui nos nihil emimus parvo, non vilissimarum rerum ullam, librorum comparatione. Proinde vos nostram industriam adiuuate, qui contra Mimi illius sententiam, Magno emimus, et vendimus parvo. Valete.

(5)

William Lily, *De constructione octo partium orationis libellus, a Desiderio Erasmo Roterodamo emendatus*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, septembre 1516, in-4°, f. [D4]<sup>r</sup>.

Alost 1973, M-133; Van Iseghem supp, pp. 18–20, n 104 bis; NK, 2893.

Theodoricus Martinus Alustensis Chalcographus Hadriano Barlando S. P. D.

Accepi mi Hadriane libellum tuum, quem laudatum a laudatissimis viris etiam formis meis excudi, ut (quod mereris) nomini tuo celebritatis aliquid adstruerem, et studiosi bonarum litterarum iuvenes enchiridion haberent, quo adiuti possent ad audiendos legendosque oratorum libros venire multo paratiores. Nunc igitur te non solum hortor, sed etiam rogo ut, quando mihi quidem videris non male bonis artibus inauguratus, pergas quo cepisti studio rem Latinam iuvare, neque istos cures blaterones, qui, ut Angelus tuus non minus vere quam eleganter dixit, glandem adhuc defendunt inventis frugibus. Nam speramus fore propediem, ut cum viderint eruditissimis quibusque tuas vigilias non displicere, ipsi tunc incipi-



ant amicus de te tuisque lucubrationibus, et sentire, et loqui. Vale, proque munere tuo quam amplissimam a nobis gratiam exspecta, Lovanii ex ædibus nostris.

## (6)

Érasme, *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*,  
Louvain: Dirk Martens, 1517, in-4°, f. [43]<sup>r</sup>.  
Alost 1973, M-151; NK, 777; Van Iseghem, 113.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis amico lectori S. D.

Quoniam perpendebam non omnibus suppetere, unde sibi magna volumina redimant, aut si suppetit, incommodum est circumferre, studui et in hac parte consulere studiosis, adiectis locis ex utriusque libris decerptis, circa quos hæc apologia versatur, videlicet annotatione Erasmi in secundum caput epistolæ ad Hebræos, et Fabri ex eodem loco huius annotationis insectatione, si quis aut diligentior, aut parum credulus, causam omnem propius et exactius velit expendere. Bene vale lector optime.

## (7)

f. [43]<sup>v</sup>:

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis S.

Quamquam sedulo adnixa sumus ne quid mendarum inesset, tamen præstari non potuit, quin operarum incuria quædam inciderint errata, licet leviuscula. Verum ne quid vel hic lector morosus desideraret, ea subnotanda curavimus.

## (8)

*Catonis disticha moralia*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, septembre 1517, in-4°, f. Aii<sup>r</sup>.  
Alost 1973, M-149; NK, 535; Van Iseghem supp, 120 bis.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis typographus candido lectori S. D.

Si non sine causa laudatum est a plerisque Hesiodum illud, ἀγαθὴ δ' ἔρις ἥδε βροτοῖς cum faber invidet fabro, aut vicinus vicino ad opes properanti, quanto magis laudandum est hoc pulcherrimum certamen, si typographi pro se quisque certemus, edendis optimis et emendatissimis libris non alios modo, verum etiam in

dies nos ipsos vincere, quod victoriæ genus Plato multo omnium pulcherrimum iudicat. Neque tamen refugio antagonistas, modo rectis rationibus decertetur, hoc est, ut is palmam ferat, qui quam optimos libros quam emendatissime dederit. Formularum mearum me non pænitet, et ei Academiæ mea desudat officina, quæ ut parem alicubi habeat, certe superiorem non habet, quodcumque disciplinarum aut ornamentorum genus ad calculum voces, hoc certe peculiariter eminens, quod una omnium tres exhibeat, qui singuli singulas linguas profiteantur, Græcam Hebraicam et Latinam, idque tum gratis, tum magnifico salario, quod in hunc usum legavit egregius ille vir et omnium sæculorum memoria dignus Hieronymus Buslidius quondam præpositus Ariensis. Quod pulcherrimum facinus, ut alii alibi imitentur, certe exempli laus penes inclytam Lovaniensium Academiam semper futura est. Quod superest, ipse adnitar, ne vel bonorum studiis, vel huius scholæ gloriæ, vel meo officio videar defuisse. Τῶν ὁμοτέχων partes erunt, virtute laudem ambire, non maledictis lædere. Sunt horum aliquot antehac et ab aliis, et a nobis edita, fateor, sed ea nunc denuo a me ita tractata, ut nova videri possint. Bene vale, ac fave lector optime id tuo bono factururus. Lovanii. An. M.D.XVII.

## (9)

Érasme, *Paraphrasis in Pauli epistolam ad Romanos*,

Louvain: Dirk Martens, 1517, in-4°, f. [77]<sup>v</sup>.

Alost 1973, M-148; NK, 846; Van Iseghem supp, 120.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis typographus candidis lectoribus S. D.

Quantum habeat momenti typographorum ars ad provehenda litterarum studia, vel unus ille Aldus Manutius esse documento potest. Proinde nos quoque pro virili, Lovaniensem Academiam, omni studiorum ac doctrinæ genere florentissimam, officina nostra qualicumque studemus adiuvere, sedulo conantes ut ex ea vobis libri prodeant, primum et ad vitam instituendam, et ad eruditionem comparandam idonei, deinde quam minime mendosi. Nam quidam, dum plus satis avidi quæstus libros edunt incastigatos, bis male merentur, primum de ipsis auctoribus, quorum opera depravant atque infamant, deinde de lectore, cui pro libro crucem ac tormentum obtrudunt. Verum hic meus conatus ita demum succedet, si vester candor respondeat. Officium officio provocatur et alitur. Nostram in excudendis libris diligentiam excitabit augebitque vestra in emendis aviditas. Id fiet, si non ut quisque liber est maximus, sed ut quisque est optimus et emendatissimus, ita vobis quam maxime vendibilis habeatur. Bene valete. Ex officina nostra Lovanii. An. M. D. XVII.

## (10)

*Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, [1518], in-4°. ASD IX-3, p. 53, Alost 1973, A 262, pp. 187–88 et M-165; NK, 778; Van Iseghem, 146.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis candido lectori salutem.

En denuo optime lector trado tibi castigatius typis excusam Erasmi apologiam, quæ cum eruditis omnibus placeat, non solum ob singularem ingenii vim, qua declarat sese in his quoque valere, si genus hoc scripti magis probasset, verum etiam ob raram animi modestiam et civilitatem, qua sic refellit adversarium parum civiliter impetentem, ut tamen amicum fuisse meminerit, tum magis placitura sit, si scias, id quod nobis constat, opus hoc illi intra duodecim dies, et cœptum et absolutum, nec sine gravi animi dolore, quod in hoc scripti genus compulsus esset descendere. Adiecimus summam argumentorum Fabri, mire in compendium contractorum, ob lectorem vel occupatum, vel fastidiosum. Præterea epistolam argutam et facundam, qua placat eos, qui dicitant cum aut non debuissent respondere Fabro, aut moderatius respondere debuissent. Bene vale.

## (11)

*Aristophanis Plutus*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, 1518, 4°, f. Aii<sup>v</sup>. Alost 1973, M-164; NK, 134; Van Iseghem, 121.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis studiosæ Lovaniensis Academiæ iuventuti. S. D.

Ceteri fere chalcographi fœtus officinarum suarum aut magnatibus dedicant, aut egregie caris inscribunt. Mihi quoniam nihil antiquius est, quam huius Academiæ florentissimæ studiis pro virili consulere, quicquid ars nostra produxerit, id omne vobis optimi iuvenes dicare certum est. En damus in præsentia libellum exiguum, sed eximium. Quantum Fabius tribuerit veteri comœdiæ scitis ipsi, qui tenetis illud de ea elogium. Antiqua illa comœdia cum sinceram illam sermonis Attici gratiam prope sola retinet, tum fecundissimæ libertatis, etsi est in insectandis vitiis præcipua, plurimum tamen virium etiam in ceteris partibus habet. Nam et grandis, et elegans, et venusta, et nescio an ulla post Homerum tamen, quem ut Achillem semper excipi par est, aut similior sit oratoribus, aut ad oratores faciendos aptior. Atque is inter tam laudati generis primos auctores, primas tribuit Aristophani. Ac rursus inter huius fabulas primas tenet Plutus, sive leporem spectes, sive fecunditatem argumenti, qui nunc bonis avibus a nobis exit. Atque utinam fiat, ut quantum vobis est allaturus lucri in bonis litteris, tantum ad me redeat rei domesticæ compendium. Quid autem precemur istis, quorum opera tota Græcorum nova comœdia periit, in qua sic excelluerunt illi, ut ad huius gratiam Latini ne aspirare quidem potuerint. Saltem unus exstaret Menander qui auctore Quintiliano adeo

pollet inveniendi copia et eloquendi facultate, sic omnibus rebus ac personis accommodatus, ut unus nobis multorum instar esse posset. Sed quo minus superest, hoc avidius utendum est iis, quæ superesse contigit. Bene valete, καὶ διὰ πλούτου ἀφθόγως πλουτοῖτε. In alma Lovaniensium Academia. An. M.D.XVIII.

## (12)

*Declamationes aliquot*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, 1518, 4°, f. [71]<sup>v</sup>.

Alost 1973, A 252, p. 182 et M-166; NK, 811 = 2971

(avec une page de titre différente); Van Iseghem, 125.

Theodoricus Martinus Alustensis S. D. lectoribus candidis.

Non me clam est candidissimi lectores, ita natura comparatum esse, ut præclara molientibus semper aliquis malus obstrepat genius. Me tamen ab utilitate publica, quoad οἶνος spiritus hos regat artus, nullæ difficultates deterrebunt, siccus, uvidus idem agam, si non dabitur frui meis laboribus, tamen hoc ipsum iuvat posteritati consuluisse. In excudendis Latinis, nulli cedo, in Græcis, perpauca, in Hebraicis ambimus similem laudem, nec deerit successus nostris votis, si vos modo conanti mihi pro vestra portione respondeatis. Respondebitis autem, si et vestris commoditatibus, et huius florentissimæ scholæ nomini consulere voletis. Lovanii, tertio Cal. Apri. An. M.D.XVIII.

## (13)

*Prudentii Inter Christianos facundissimi poetæ carmina quædam selecta pietatis cultoribus*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, novembre 1518, in-4°, f. [a]<sup>r</sup>.

Alost 1973, M-162; NK, 3779; Van Iseghem, 129.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis bonarum litterarum studiosis S. D.

Ut ex mea officina non modo qui facundum, verum etiam qui meliorem reddere lectorem possint auctores, exirent, his diebus formis excudi pluscula Aurelii Prudentii Christiani poetæ carmina, quæ si studiose legeritis optimi adolescentes in pietate multum proficietis. Quam ego quoque iam senex multa canitie, et obrugata cute post tot exantlatos in omni vita labores ante omnia specto, ut qui sciam nulum Deo studium perinde gratum esse, nisi accesserit pietas, quæ discordiam nescit, quæ facit ut Christum humani generis vindicem ex toto corde, et omnes homines ut fratres diligamus. Prudentii carminibus adieci Ausonii illustris poetæ de Cæsari-bus tetrasticha, in quibus non dubito, quin sit elegantissima placitura brevis. Val-ete iuvenes optimi et Theodorico vestro favete.

## (14)

*Ratio seu Methodus compendio perveniendi ad veram theologiam,*

Louvain: Dirk Martens, novembre 1518, in-4°, f. [67]<sup>v</sup>.

Alost 1973, A 264, pp. 188–89 et M-161; NK, 2973 et 861; Van Iseghem, 132.

Theodoricus Martinus Alustensis candido lectori S. D.

Equidem non ignoro vulgus hominum res plerasque non ob aliud admirari, nisi quia exoticæ sunt et e longinquo advectæ. Sic miramur tophos aut fruticem, quos credimus ex Hierosolymis adductos, cum in proximo litore sæpenumero collecta sint. Sic suspicimus pharmaca ab extremis Indis allata, cum in hortis salubriora nascuntur. Sic Parmeno Terentianus puellam commendat: 'Ex Æthopia usque hæc est'. Atque ab hoc affectu doctos homines longissime abesse oportebat, et tamen inter hos sunt, qui nec auctorem probant, nec librum magni æstimant, nisi a longinquo importatum. Quid autem iniquius, immo quid stultius? Adeone nostris invidemus? Sunt nationes quæ nihil admirantur, nisi sua. Nos contra nihil habemus in pretio, nisi barbara peregrinaque. Tot typographos alit Basilea, prorsus infrequens frigidaque Academia, si ad Lovaniensem conferatur. Hæc, excepta Parisiensi, nulla inferior, unum alere gravatur. Τὸ τέχνιον πᾶσα γῆ τρέφει, hac una excepta. Profecto nisi manus manum fricet, res non potest consistere. Auctor nihil aliud quam gratum lectorem quærit, ego emacem quæro. Ingratum est bonum librum laudare tantum, ingratus κατασυκοφαντεῖν. Alii ditescunt malis libris excudendis, ego bonis edendis vix alo familiam, quamlibet abstemius. Et tamen nihil a me datur, quin ementi plus sit lucri quam vendenti. Eme igitur, et simul utriusque commodo consule. Ac vale.

## (15)

*Colloquia (Formulæ),* Louvain, Dirk Martens, 1519, in-4°, f. aii<sup>r</sup>.

ASD I-3, pp. 116–17; Alost 1973, M-177; NK, 2869; Van Iseghem, 175.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis amico lectori S. D.

Quoniam quicquid otii mihi datur a non seriis negotiis, id totum ad eorum utilitatem soleo conferre, qui bonarum litterarum sacra colunt. Perpendens quosdam præceptores in perplexis ac frigidis grammatices præceptiunculis puerorum ætatem absumere, rursus excudi colloquiorum libellum, cuiuscumque sit, et undecumque concinnatus, non inutilem ad parandam facultatem cottidiani sermonis, atque eum quidem non paucis locis et emendatum, et locupletatum, ne quis existimet nihil esse novi fructus, quod hanc commendet editionem. Inamœnitas præceptionum multos alienat a linguarum cognitione, sine qua cæcæ mancæque sunt omnes ceteræ disciplinæ. Loquendi ratio non alio pacto melius discitur, quam loquendo. Hæc

nunc in medium damus, daturi meliora, si senserimus hæc candidis animis accipi. Nusquam enim magis convenit, quam in honestis disciplinis, ut pro se quisque quod potest conferat in commune, et (quod olim in sodaliciis conviviis fieri consuevit) nec asymbolos quisquam accedat, et quod quisque attulerit, boni consulat. Porro, qui nec ipsi quicquam adferunt, et ab aliis allata fastidiunt, aut fortassis iniecta narium pituita conspurcant, procul a Musarum convivio reor asportandos, ut porcorum convivio digniores. Bene vale, et si bonas litteras diligas, meam industriam tuo favore adiuva. Favere autem oportet, οὐ λόγοις μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ χρήμασιν.

## (16)

*Index omnium Erasmi lucubrationum,*

Louvain: Dirk Martens, 1er janvier 1519, in-4°, f. [A]<sup>r</sup>.

Alost 1973, A 246, pp. 180–81 et M-184; Bruxelles 1969, pp. 4–5, n°1; NK, 3502; Van Iseghem, 138 et Van Iseghem supp.

Theodoricus Martinus Alustensis amicis lectoribus S.

Quoniam cottidie flagitor ut exhibeam indicem librorum Erasmi Roterodami, ut hac quoque in parte votis tuis respondeam optime lector, excudendum curavi, quantum partim ab ipso, partim a familiaribus illius quivi cognoscere. Pleraque iam edita sunt, nonnulla inabsoluta, quædam interciderunt. Bene vale. Lovanii Cal. Ian. M.D.XIX.

## (17)

*Dictionarium Hebraicum,* Louvain: Dirk Martens, 1520, in-4°.

Alost 1973, M-204; NK, 1498; Van Iseghem, 168.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis candidis lectoribus S.

Redegimus in enchiridion, lectores optimi, primitiva vocabula, sive radices Hebraicarum dictionum, quæ a Capnione diligenter et diffuse tractantur, cuius ideo ubique ferme verba apposuimus, quod ingeniosi in alienis libris videri nolimus. Excerpsimus tamen hæc in rem vestram, ne sine his frustra in sacra hac lingua perdiscenda sudaretis. Interim si Germania quod ante annos aliquot promisit, exsolverit, hic parum perdideritis, quin potius (nisi vehementer fallar) prius quam illud auctius lexicon in lucem venerit, vos omnem difficultatem prætergressi eritis. Nos compendio apud vos utimur, ut cito percipiat quæ discenda erunt, et percepta fideliter teneatis. Quicquid ergo eruditioni vestræ hinc accreverit, ei acceptum referte, a quo desumptum est. Valete, et periculum in hac re exigua facite, ut scire possitis, quid vobis in reliquis agendum sit.

## (18)

*Enchiridion militis christiani*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, mai 1520, in-4°, f. [16]<sup>v</sup>.  
Alost 1973, A 256, pp. 184–85 et M-193; NK, 2928; Van Iseghem, 167 et  
Van Iseghem supp.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis candido lectori S. D.

Quamquam varios libros hactenus candide lector typis nostris excudimus, nullus tamen in iis est *ὃς τὴν ἀλήθειαν*, qui vere Christianam pietatem amplexus, accommodatior sit quam hic quantumvis mediocris. Aperit enim brevem, sed ipsissimam Christianismi rationem, ostendens quo pacto sit e vita flagitiosa ad piam enitendum, quid agendum iam proficienti, quid demum ei qui iam emergerit imprimis spectandum observandumque. Scatet saluberrimis remediis adversus vitia, ad virtutes amplexandas rationibus efficacissimis plenus est. Legant alii doctores subtiles, irrefragabiles, illuminatos, vix certe post decennale studium olfacient, quod hic libellus ubique sine fūco candide docet. Nihil reperiēs hic vel sophisticum, vel perplexum, vel dubiosum, sed euangelicam et Paulinam doctrinam et germanam huius interpretationem, hoc est, imprimis Origenis, Hieronymi, Ambrosii, Augustini, et huius ordinis ceterorum. Superest ut, qui ad Christianam pietatem compendio et recta contendere voles, hunc libellum e manibus numquam deponas. Bene vale, et Alostensem pro commodo tuo diu noctuque laborantem ama. Lovanii ipsis Nonis Maii. Anno M.D.XX.

## (19)

*Parabole sive similia*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, juin 1520, in-8°.  
ASD 1-5, p. 25; Alost 1973, M-194; NK, 839 [3]; Van Iseghem, 158.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis Lectoribus S. D.

Habetis hic D. Erasmi Roterodami Parabolas sive Similia, libellum incomparabilis utilitatis, quem in enchiridii formam hac sane gratia contraximus, ut commodior sit gestatu, studiosisque comes individuus adhæreat domi, foris, otiantibus, peregrinantibus, sive reptent, sive deambulant. Accessit operi præter auctoris ipsius recognitionem, etiam vocabulorum non ita vulgarium in calce explicatio. Bene valete. Apud inclytum Lovanium.

## (20)

*Apologia respondens ad ea quæ Iacobus Lopis Stunica taxaverat in prima dumtaxat Novi Testamenti editione*, Louvain: Dirk Martens, septembre 1521, in-4°, f. [63]<sup>v</sup>.

Alost 1973, M-212; NK, 2851; Van Iseghem, 173.

Theodoricus Martinus Alostensis studiosis salutem, et typographicam benedictionem.

Quamquam sedulo advigilatum est a nobis, adeo ut geminis oculis uteremur, interim καὶ τοῦ Βρομίου πολλάκις ἀπεχόμενοι, tamen vitari non potuit, quin aliqua nos suffugerint. Ea subiiciemus.

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## THE ERASMUS-VIVES CORRESPONDENCE

Charles Fantazzi

Epistolary relations between Erasmus and Vives began rather inauspiciously in the form of a postscript to a short note of Erasmus to Thomas More sent from Antwerp on 8 March 1517. He remarks candidly: 'If Vives has been with you often, you will easily guess what I have had to put up with every day with so many Spaniards come to pay their respects, in addition to Italians and Germans'.<sup>1</sup> Erasmus is no doubt referring to his position at the court of Charles V in Brussels, to which he had been appointed in 1516 through the intervention of the chancellor of the Empire, Jean Sauvage. We know that he was acquainted with Vives at court at this time from a reference to him in the *Apologia qua respondet duabus invectivis Eduardi Lei* of 1520.<sup>2</sup> The letter was published in the *Farrago nova epistolarum* of 1519, where the identification is reinforced by a marginal gloss, *Lud. Vives*. Apparently Erasmus later regretted his disparaging comment when he had come to know Vives better for in the next edition of these early letters, the *Epistolae ad diversos* of 1521, the name is changed to the fictitious one of Pollio, a suitable alias for Vives since Caius Asinius Pollio, a contemporary of Virgil, was known for his declamatory powers, for which Vives was also noted, and had been governor of Further Spain.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Si Vives crebro fuit apud te, facile coniectabis quid ego passus sim Bruxellae, cui cotidie cum tot saluatoribus Hispanis fuerit res, praeter Italos et Germanos'. Allen II, Ep. 545. 15–17.

<sup>2</sup> *ASD* IX-4, p. 26, ll. 64–65; *CWE* 72, 6.

<sup>3</sup> In a note to the translation of this letter James McConica suggests that it may recall a description of Pollio found in Catullus 12, 8–9, 'est enim leporum / differtus puer ac facetiarum' ('a young man filled with charm and wit'), *CWE* 4, 274, n. 16.

After declining to accompany Charles to Spain Erasmus moved to Louvain in July of 1517, where he must have met frequently with Vives during his stay there. By February of 1519 his estimation of the young Spanish scholar had changed drastically. Writing to Juan de la Parra, personal physician of Prince Ferdinand, he recommends Vives as tutor of the young prince (Allen III, Ep. 917). Lavish in his praise, he describes him as uncommonly learned in every branch of philosophy, humane studies and eloquence, to such a degree that none could rival him. It so happened that on that very day on which Erasmus sent this letter of recommendation, 13 February 1519, Vives sent his long epistle, the famous diatribe *In pseudodialecticos*, to his friend and compatriot, Juan Fort. This work called the attention of both Erasmus and Thomas More to the young Spanish humanist and generated an exchange of letters between Erasmus and Vives, which Allen dated provisionally to the year 1520, although it is now clear from a letter in the newly discovered *Litterae ad Craneveldium Balduinianae* that these letters were written in 1519. In Epistle 7 of this collection, Vives informs Cranevelt that he is feeling somewhat relaxed for at that very moment he ceased to dream and to be awake at the same time,<sup>4</sup> an explicit reference to the completion of the *Somnium et Vigilia in Somnium Ciceronis*, which he says he had sent off to the press on the previous day. The dedicatory epistle of that work is dated 28 March 1520. Later in the letter, in proof of his continued publishing activities, Vives says that he gave birth to fifteen books in one delivery a year ago, his *Opuscula varia*. Therefore the *In pseudodialecticos*, which was included in this collection, must be dated to 1519, not 1520, which necessitates changing Allen's dating for the series of letters exchanged between Erasmus and Vives during this period.

The first of these, numbered 1108 in Allen IV, is Vives's lengthy account of his triumphant visit to Paris shortly after the publication of the *In pseudodialecticos*. He tells Erasmus that he was apprehensive that he might meet with a cool reception from the sophisters at the University and was therefore careful to make no mention of the matter, but that to his surprise they laughed at his attempts to conceal the subject, assuring him that things were different now and that they had taken his criticism in good part. He then goes on to say how much praise was reserved for Erasmus's work on the New Testament, the *Adagia*, and even the *Moria*, delight of all the world. The rest of the letter describes his meeting with Budé for the first time, and here he gives full rein to his Spanish penchant for adulation, at such length, one suspects, that it would have become wearisome to

<sup>4</sup> 'Solutior iam sum aliquanto: hac enim ipsa hora et somnare desii et vigilare'. See *Litterae ad Craneveldium Balduinianae*, ed. by IJsewijn and Tournoy, p. 26.

the recipient, especially in view of the recent petulant exchange of letters between the two older scholars. Vives takes it upon himself to expatiate on the love and affection that exists between them, putting words into their mouths, as it were, in his forced attempt to reconcile them. He admits, however, that certain harmless barbs (not so harmless, in reality) had passed between them in their lighter moments, which some people might interpret incorrectly.

Erasmus wrote a favourable but much briefer response, a poor supper of Diogenes rather than a Lucullan feast, as he states (Allen IV, Ep. 1104). He congratulates Vives on his success but makes little comment about what he said of Budé save to remark that a little skirmishing in pen and ink could not separate two minds bound fast in concord by the Muses. It is obvious that this was a first hasty response, which Erasmus would later elaborate for formal publication in the *Epistolae ad diversos*, intended for wider diffusion (Allen IV, Ep. 1111). This letter is more of a set piece, exuding bonhomie, optimism and good will. Congratulating Vives on his prosperous journey, he says:

Really you must have been born under some lucky star! — for a renegade like yourself to have engaged in a successful skirmish against your old companions-in-arms, the sophisters, especially in Paris, where, since it seemed to be, as it were, the reigning queen and the citadel of the subject, there was some danger that you might be pelted with stones or stung to death by hornets.<sup>5</sup>

Erasmus uses the celebrity of Vives's essay as a public occasion to review the progress of humane studies in the learned world, noting that the Muses have been invited back to Paris and the logic-choppers driven out, and that at Oxford and Cambridge sophistical disputation has been replaced by sound and sober discussions among theologians. The letter ends on a very friendly note, in which Erasmus welcomes Vives back to Louvain. 'Farewell, Luis, my scholarly friend, and pray let us see you here well and cheerful, as soon as possible'.<sup>6</sup> In no other letter does Erasmus address Vives in such a familiar manner.

This letter marks the high point in the Erasmus-Vives correspondence. Vives's virtuoso performance against the logicians of Paris earned him a kind of official

<sup>5</sup> 'Nae te prospero quodam sydere natum esse oportuit, cui tam feliciter successerit quod profuga velitatus sis in veteres commilitones tuos sophistas; praesertim Lutetiae, ubi, quod huius disciplinae veluti regnum et arx quaedam esse videbatur, periculum erat ne lapidareris aut crabronum aculeis confoderis' (Allen IV, Ep. 1111, 4–9).

<sup>6</sup> 'Bene vale, Lodovice doctissime, et cura ut te quam primum hic hilarem ac lubentem videamus.' (Allen IV, Ep. 1111, 92–93).

seal of approval from the Erasmus/More circle, to use Lisa Jardine's designation.<sup>7</sup> As a Spaniard and as a much younger man, he never became a member of the inner circle, but it is clear that Erasmus and More capitalized on the talents of this young and very promising scholar. Budé in his turn perceived that Vives might act as a cohesive bond (*glutinum tenacissimum*) in safeguarding his friendship with Erasmus, if ever any small disagreement might arise, as he says in a letter to Erasmus of 10 June 1519 (Allen III, Ep. 987). Vives himself was the bearer of this letter to Erasmus on his way back to Louvain. When Erasmus did not reply, Budé wrote a long letter to Vives in which he expresses his concern about this silence and implores him to convince Erasmus that he has not been offended by the numerous darts that the latter has let fly.<sup>8</sup>

Erasmus's reaction to the embassy of Vives is politely but emphatically negative. He writes a formal epistle to Budé entirely in Greek (Allen IV, Ep. 1004), in which he insists that there is no need of Luis Vives to cement their friendship (*ζυμόνοια* is the word he uses in Greek), but that the two of them should strive to couch their pleasantries in more moderate and elegant language so that their friendship might be the more apparent to others.

Budé answers dutifully with two letters, one (Allen IV, Ep. 1011) entirely and the other (Allen IV, Ep. 1015) partially in Greek, in which language he excelled Erasmus, and once again Vives is called in as witness to testify to the greater guilt of Erasmus in the use of epistolary persiflage. It is clear from these letters that Vives was placed in the delicate position of mediator between two scholars of such difficult temperament and sensitivity. This unenviable role could not have been very beneficial to his relations with the great man.

At any rate, a much more serious crisis was precipitated by the affair of the commentary on Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. Erasmus had been planning for some time to produce a revised text of the whole Augustinian corpus with illustrative commentary. He had begun work on this project as early as 1518, but was forced to lay it aside in order to complete other patristic editions. Eventually, perceiving that even his extraordinary energies were unequal to the task, he decided to divide the work among various scholars. Thus it was that Vives was persuaded, in the autumn of 1520, to undertake the text and commentary of the *De civitate Dei*. In his youthful enthusiasm Vives had never imagined the magnitude of the task nor the amount of recondite and varied learning involved. Signs of discord began to manifest themselves early on, as is revealed in a series of letters of Vives

<sup>7</sup> Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, pp. 17–20.

<sup>8</sup> Budaeus, *Omnia opera*, I, 252.

to Erasmus. None of these letters were published by Erasmus nor were any of his answers. Some of Vives's letters, however, must have remained among Erasmus's papers in the possession of Bonifacius Amerbach, and presumably these were the source for the letters printed in the earliest edition of Vives's collected works published by Nicolaus Episcopius the Younger in 1555.

In one of them, in answer to a letter of Erasmus no longer extant, Vives makes this forceful remonstrance to his esteemed teacher:

You cut me to the quick with that remark of yours, 'I shall not weary you so often with my demands.' You appear to be unwilling to give me good advice in the future about the usefulness of my studies; as a matter of fact, the encouragement you give me and even what you call your demands are nothing other than an incentive to spur me on to great things when otherwise I would desist from my efforts. And do you call this making demands? What will you call a teacher's advice? Do you wish to be so polite to your friends and disciples that you will sadden them when they see that you treat them like people you hardly know or as your equals? After all that he has said and done, could Vives not convince you that you can do nothing he could find wearisome except when you are afraid that you may weary him? Like the heading of your letter, 'To my respected friend', and not only 'respected' but, if you please, 'most respected' (*in primis observandus*). If in future you allow your servants Joannes or Lieven to write in that way, I shall refuse delivery of the letter. If anyone is allowed to address me as 'respected', it is not Erasmus. By all the laws of friendship and all the kindnesses you have done me, and any services I may have been able to supply, I beg you to treat me on more familiar terms.<sup>9</sup>

This is pretty strong language, a *cri de coeur* from the young humanist in response to the coldness and indifference of the master.

Vives wrote an interim report on the first of April 1522 in answer to a letter of Erasmus, which again is not extant. He says that he is happy to learn that the

<sup>9</sup> 'Verberasti animum meum illo tuo verbo, "non ero tibi toties flagitando molestus". Videris enim nolle me posthac admonere utilitatis meorum studiorum; incitatio enim ista tua et etiam, ut tu vocas, efflagitatio, quid aliud est quam calcar quod me alioqui cessantem ad egregia opera stimulat? Et efflagitationem hanc nominas? Quid ergo praeceptoris vocabis monita? Vis esse tam in amicos et discipulos civiles ut moerore eos afficias, quum vident secum velut cum leviter notis aut tibi paribus agere? Nondum et agendo et dicendo potuit tibi Vives persuadere te nihil posse facere sibi molestum nisi quum ne sis molestus times? Tale est illud in superscriptione, "Amico meo observando"; nec "observando", sed etiam, si diis placet, "in primis observando". Si posthac ad hunc modum permiseris istum sive Ioannem sive Livinum scribere, reiiciam literas: cui observandus ego sum, is non est Erasmus. Per omnia iura amicitiae et universa tua in me beneficia, et si qua sunt mea in te officia, te precor tu me utaris familiarius.' (Allen v, Ep. 1256. 101–16).



*De civitate Dei* will be published separately, as he asked, and expresses his desire that it also be printed with the rest of Augustine, so that this limb will not be lacking to the complete corpus. This letter also has its share of prickly remarks, such as this one: 'I have not been so much a slave to reputation as you perhaps suppose, though I too have given it some thought'.<sup>10</sup> He confesses that somehow the writing of notes, unless they are notes on Scripture, is not of a nature to earn one a famous name, a veiled reference to Erasmus's fame in this regard. Vives then proceeds to give a sort of lecture to Erasmus about earning the approval of Christ and his own conscience rather than that of men, assuring him that future generations will know his true worth, and that he already belongs to the ages. The eulogy ends with these lofty sentiments: 'You yourself will be, as it were, exempted from the power of fate and placed in a kind of exalted position in the esteem of all good men, from which you will behold everything beneath your feet'.<sup>11</sup> Erasmus must have been nauseated by this kind of flattery. Although we do not have his answers, if there were any, to these letters, we do have an indication of the state of affairs from a letter of Vives to his good friend Franz Cranevelt, dated 8 July 1522, to whom he unburdens his feelings concerning the letters he was receiving from Erasmus, including one he had just received, which he describes as 'how harsh, how demanding, how fulminating!' (*quam acrem, quam expostulatoriam, quam fulmineam!*).<sup>12</sup> Six days later he reports to Erasmus that he has sent the whole thing off, together with a letter of dedication to Henry VIII, preface, and a note on medieval commentators (Allen v, Ep. 1303. 1–4). Another letter followed a month later, in which Vives complains of his ill health, the result of his intense labours on the Augustine:

Ever since I finished Augustine I have been in poor health; last week and this week, my whole body was completely worn out and my energies exhausted by a kind of weariness and general weakness — it felt as though ten steeples were pressing on my head with an unspeakable weight and gravity more than I could bear. Is this the reward for all my labour, the recompense for the excellent work I have done?<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 'Nec gloriae tam servivi quam forsan putas; etsi nonnihil quoque est ei datum.' (Allen v, Ep. 1271. 24–25).

<sup>11</sup> 'Et ipse velut fatis exemptus et in excelso quodam existimationis bonorum hominum positus loco, infra te videbis omnia.' (Allen v, Ep. 1271. 111–13).

<sup>12</sup> *Litterae virorum eruditorum*, ed. by de Vocht, Ep. 8, 17–19.

<sup>13</sup> 'Nam ex quo Augustinum perfeci, nunquam valui ex sententia; proxima vero hebdomade et hac, fracto corpore cuncto et nervis velut lassitudine quadam et debilitate deiectis, in caput decem turres incumbere mihi videntur indicendo pondere ac mole intolerabili. Isti sunt fructus studiorum et merces pulcherrimi laboris?' (Allen v, Ep. 1306. 8–13).



The next letter from Vives was written almost a year later from Bruges. Among other things he inquires whether his *Opuscula varia*, a group of twelve short pieces, including the *In pseudodialecticos*, would be printed by Froben. He has this to say: 'Friends have written to tell me that my *Opuscula* have not been printed, and that X [which is to say, a certain shady book-dealer named Franz Birckmann] says you are responsible for Froben's rejection of the book'.<sup>14</sup> Vives hastens to add that he did not believe a word of it, especially since it came from Birckmann. But then comes this despondent admission, which indicates that he is beginning to see the light:

I see now that I had got it all wrong. I knew I did not sit in the orchestra but I supposed that by now I had risen to the next fourteen rows, or wished I might have, but as things stand, I perceive that I am among the plebeians in the rows at the very back. How true it is that rank is determined by income even in this city! Ah well, so all those fine phrases, 'a distinguished scholar and a man of universal learning', have come down to this!<sup>15</sup>

These adjectives clearly recall the words of the title page of the *De civitate Dei* which Froben addresses to the reader: 'virum clarissimum undequaque doctissimum Ioannem Lodovicum Vivem'.

At the end of this letter Vives announces that he is on his way to Spain with a brief stop in England. He never made it to Spain, no doubt because of fear of the Inquisition. From England, a few months later, he is able to give a first-hand report of the king's satisfaction with Erasmus's treatise on the freedom of the will and conveys the greetings of the queen, who he says was also pleased with the work. Vives exhibits much more self-confidence in his relations with his correspondent in these new circumstances. He even takes the liberty to play the god Momus for a moment, pointing out a little slip on Erasmus's part in confusing the mime-writer Decimus Laberius with the more well-known Publilius Syrus (Allen v, Ep. 1513. 4–12, 23–25, 28). This time we have Erasmus's response, published again in the *Epistolae ad diversos* (Allen v, Ep. 1531), after a five-year gap in their published correspondence. Erasmus owns up to the error about Laberius, but

<sup>14</sup> 'Factus litteris amicorum certior Opuscula mea non esse a Frobenio excussa, et N. dicere te authore reiectum a Frobenio librum'. (Allen v, Ep. 1362. 78–79).

<sup>15</sup> 'Equidem falsum me opinione comperio; nam qui ut me non in orchestra sedere sciebam, sic ad quatuordecim ascendisse iam vel arbitrabar, vel cupiebam, nunc in plebeiis de postremis me esse sentio. O quam vere censu distinguuntur ordines, etiam huius civitatis! Hem huccine reciderunt illa tam magnifica "clarissimum et undequaque doctissimum?"'. (Allen v, Ep. 1362. 95–100).

chides Vives about the poor sales of the *De civitate Dei*. As for Vives's hopes of having his early works published, Erasmus says that X [that is, again Birckmann] continually discourages Froben from printing anything of Vives. One wonders about the truth of this statement.

The next letter in this protracted affair is a brief note of Vives from Bruges (Allen VI, Ep. 1613), where he returned periodically from England. He requests that if Froben has decided against publishing his *Opuscula*, he would like to have them returned to him. He also asks whether printing has begun on the complete edition of Augustine, as he had heard, and if so, expresses his desire to send a few revisions to his commentary, a mere three sheets in all. Erasmus did not publish this letter. Almost a year later, 6 August 1526 (Allen VI, Ep. 1732), Vives complains that he has not heard from Erasmus for a long time, but this time, rather than inquiring about the vicissitudes of the *De civitate Dei* he dares to offer some criticism of some of Erasmus's *Colloquies*, specifically the *Ichthyophagia*, the one on rash vows, and the *Confabulatio pia*, previously entitled *Pietas puerilis*. Vives argues that the grave topics discussed by the two young boys in this last colloquy would not be understood by the youthful readers for whom the piece was intended. Try as he might, Vives asserts, he could not convince his hearers of the congruity of these compositions.

Receiving no answer to his veiled critiques, Vives attempted after a year's lapse to elicit the comments of his mentor about his own most recent works (Allen VI, Ep. 1792). Erasmus's crisp answer was not long in coming, and it made its way into the *Opus epistolarum*. He begins sardonically: 'I see that you have become an amphibious animal, unless you prefer the name of Mercury, "beloved of the gods above and those beneath" (Horace *Odes*, 1. 10. 20–21).'<sup>16</sup> About the reception of the *Colloquies* Erasmus registers his surprise that Vives, as a good orator, was not able to defend them even if they were a total loss. As for Vives's works he approves of the treatise on marriage but says that the writing suffers from extemporaneity and that he should have tempered the excessive ardour of his words. He adds that his treatment of women is too harsh and expresses the hope that Vives exhibit more mildness towards his own wife. On this same personal level he disapproves of Vives's mention of his own relatives, since it rouses people's envy.

In his response Vives first of all retracts his criticism of the *Colloquies*, but when it comes to discussing his own works, he is more on the defensive. He apologizes for the style, explaining that he was worn out by the Augustine and that

<sup>16</sup> 'Video te factum ζῶον ἀμφίβιον, nisi mavis dici Mercurius, superis deorum gratus et imis' (Allen VII, Ep. 1830. 1–2.)

since he was writing for women he adopted a plainer style. This was less than tactful on his part since these sentiments might have been relayed to the queen. He then blurts out rather boldly:

You say that I treat women rather harshly. Do you say this, the man who brought Jerome back to us? [...] And you say that I take delight in mentioning my family, but who doesn't? Doesn't Seneca, and Quintilian, and Pliny?<sup>17</sup>

Actually, in his revisions of the work in 1538 Vives toned down the reference to his mother, but not to the saintly behaviour of his mother-in-law, Clara Cervent, in caring for her syphilitic husband.

Erasmus's response is rather callous. Once again he refers to Vives as an amphibious animal, one day swimming his way to Britain and the next making his nest in Bruges, so that it is difficult for letters to reach him. He admits that he had barely glanced at Vives's books, but passes on the good news that Augustine is being printed in a very impressive edition. As for Vives's contribution Erasmus has this to say: 'But they say that your volume will not go to press at this time because the booksellers still have too many copies to sell. If you wish to have anything corrected or added, it can be done. But in that case, my dear Vives, I should not wish you to encumber the volume with superfluous material'.<sup>18</sup> The truth is that Vives's volume was the last to be published, almost as if in the end Erasmus felt that he could not possibly omit it. Apart from the brief mention of Vives on the title page, it is the bare text, with none of Vives's prefaces, introduction or notes. With all due respect for Erasmus's editorial criteria this can only be accounted as rather shabby treatment. Poor sales seem to be a very specious excuse. One is led to suspect that Erasmus feared that Vives's learned commentary and philosophical reflections might outshine his own less exhaustive notes in other volumes. At any rate, a few years later, in 1531, Claude Chevallon decided to publish his own edition of Augustine in Paris with a revised version of the Froben text, but this time the book contains Vives's preface to Henry VIII, Henry's reply, which had not before been printed, other introductory matter, all of Vives's notes and his harsh criticisms of previous editors. Significantly, Vives's eulogy of Erasmus in the preface to the reader is reduced to a perfunctory line or two of formal

<sup>17</sup> 'Feminas a me durius tractatas. Hoc tu dicis, homo qui nobis Hieronymum restitueris? [...] Meorum libenter facio mentionem; quotusquisque non facit? An non Seneca? non Quintilianus? non Caecilius?'. (Allen VII, Ep. 1847. 38–39; 48–49).

<sup>18</sup> 'Negant tamen tuum volumen hoc tempore excussum iri, quod omnes socii abundant libris. Si quid correctum velis aut adiectum, poterit adiici. Verum hic, mi Vives, nolim te superfluis onerare volumen'. (Allen VII, Ep. 1889. 15–18).

acknowledgement. Allen mildly remarks: 'It therefore seems not unlikely that the treatment of Vives in this matter may have caused temporary unpleasantness with Erasmus.'<sup>19</sup> After the death of Erasmus, the Froben firm republished volume v in 1542, following Chevallon in all these particulars, and again in 1555 and 1569. It also became the basis of the Louvain edition printed by Plantijn in 1576. Obviously the strictures of Erasmus did not hinder its success.

Another factor that contributed to the strain in their relations was Erasmus's omission of Vives's name in the *Ciceronianus*. It was Caspar Ursinus Velius, writing from Prague, (Allen VII, Ep. 2008) not Vives, who brought this to the attention of Erasmus. In a letter to Vives Erasmus pleads forgetfulness and the pressures of work. He writes:

Besides, your name is celebrated already and I have no doubt that one day it will be very celebrated, especially if some day you make your name with some work of practical interest, like the book published by Lazare Baïf.<sup>20</sup>

The book in question is a study on ancient dress, *De re vestiaria*, a revised version of which Erasmus published years later together with a treatise on kitchen vessels (*De vasculis culinariis*). Even to suggest such banal antiquary topics to a writer of Vives's calibre is really quite insulting. Then, presumably in answer to a query of Vives about the impending royal divorce, Erasmus gives this flippant reply:

God forbid that I meddle in the affair of Jupiter and Juno, especially since I am not well informed about it. I would sooner award two Junos to one man rather than take one away.<sup>21</sup>

Erasmus, who never aspired to martyrdom, was not willing to incite the anger of the king, while Vives remained faithful to his compatriot, Queen Catherine, and as a result was deprived of his royal pension. To all of these taunts Vives responded very meekly:

It would have given me great pleasure if you had mentioned my name. But I readily pardon this slip of your old age even if you purposely passed over my name since I am certain you did not do it out of personal enmity.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1309, preface, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> 'Tam est celebre nomen tuum, nec dubito quin aliquando futurum celeberrimum, praesertim si te semel commendes opusculo ad utilitatem parato, quale est Lazari Bayfi'. (Allen VII, Ep. 2040. 36–38).

<sup>21</sup> 'Negocio Iovis et Iunonis absit ut me admisceam, praesertim incognito. Citius tribuerim uni duas Iunones quam unam adimerem'. (Allen VII, Ep. 2040. 41–42).

<sup>22</sup> 'Me nominatum abs te esse longe fuisset gratissimum. Sed senilis huius ἀμαρτήματος

At the end of the letter he becomes quite personal:

I think truer glory and praise is bestowed upon you when I see that someone has been made a better person by reading the works of your great genius than when you hear all those epithets: 'most eloquent, most learned, most excellent'.<sup>23</sup>

He ends the letter with a rejoinder to Erasmus's closing remark: 'Would that Jupiter and Juno would make offerings not to the ancient goddess Venus, but to Christ, converter of hearts'.<sup>24</sup> Vives here plays on an ancient cult-title of Venus, *Verticordia*.

In his next letter, written nearly a year later, Vives expresses his gratitude to Erasmus for mentioning him in the preface to the Augustine (and it was just that, the mere mention of his name) because it came from him and was a testimony to their friendship. But then Vives immediately returns to the topic of the renunciation of fame and glory, which, he says, are always tinged with bitter gall. He elaborates this sentiment more pointedly than he did in the previous letter:

Certainly at one time I admired fame from afar and pursued it, but now that I have come closer to it and almost have it within my grasp, I understand that it is utter folly, and more foolish still are those who strive to attain it. If I can be of some benefit to the morals of mankind, that is what I consider as something solid and lasting. I have said this so that you will not hold out before me so frequently the illusory appearance of fame as an enticement, which I wish you to know is of no importance whatever to me and no more moves me than the slightest breeze.<sup>25</sup>

We have no answer of Erasmus to these not-so-subtle admonishments.

The last letter we know of dates to 10 May 1534 (Allen x, Ep. 2932), in answer to one of Erasmus sent at the beginning of the year. Vives is sorry to hear that Erasmus's health is failing and prays that Christ will grant him the strength of body

facile tibi gratiam facio, etiamsi me consulto praetermisisses; quandoquidem compertum habeo nihil abs te inimico animo esse factum'. (Allen VII, Ep. 2061. 19–22).

<sup>23</sup> 'Veriorem tibi gloriam laudemque censeo contingere quum aliquem legendis ingenii tui monumentis meliorem factum video, quam quum illa omnia audis "facundissimum, doctissimum, maximum"'. (Allen VII, Ep. 2061. 77–80).

<sup>24</sup> 'Iupiter et Iuno utinam aliquando litent non priscæ illi Veneri sed Christo verticordio'. Allen VII, Ep. 2061. 81–82).

<sup>25</sup> 'Itaque aliquando famam procul aspectam admirabar, sequebar; nunc propius admotam et prope contrectam intelligo rem esse vanissimam, vaniores qui captant. Si qua hominum moribus prodesse queam, id demum solidum esse arbitror et permansurum. Haec dixi ne tu mihi toties famae speciem tanquam illectamentum quoddam obicias; cui scito me nihil omnino tribuere, nec ea magis moveri quam aurula tenuissima'. (Allen VIII, Ep. 2208. 26–32).

and mind to be able to support his sufferings. He dismisses the rumour that their friendship had cooled because fewer letters passed between them, referring specifically to an incident that we can follow from a previous correspondence between Erasmus and Pedro Mejia, a mutual friend of Vives and Erasmus. Mejia had apparently forwarded to Erasmus a letter which he had received from Vives, in which Vives voiced the suspicion that Erasmus's friendship with him had grown cold because of a letter of commendation he had written for Francisco Luis Carvajal, a Franciscan friar, author of an *Edulcoratio amarulentiarum Erasmi responsionis ad Apologiam Fratris Lodovici Carvaiali ab eodem Lodovico edita*. Erasmus assures Mejia that this was not the case at all, and that Vives's letter was a mere introduction of a very non-committal character. Vives in turn assures Erasmus that he had written to Mejia in an effort to discourage Carvajal from using his name if he were to write something against Erasmus in the future, and making it clear that they were still friends, united by their common interests, lest people think they were not men who strive after wisdom, but potters jealous of one another, as in Erasmus's adage ('non affectatores sapientiae ἀλλὰ κεραμεῖς', *Adagia*, 1. ii. 25).

The last paragraph of the letter is very sombre and pessimistic. These are difficult times, Vives says, in which we can neither speak nor be silent without danger. In Spain Vergara and his brother Tovar together with many other learned men have been put in prison. In England the same is true of the Bishop of Rochester and of London (Vives refers to John Stokesley, but his information was erroneous) and Thomas More. His last words to Erasmus are: 'Precor tibi senectam facilem', without a formal closing salutation. He may be referring to his physical health but I think he also implies an old age free of the acrid controversies in which he was engaged in his later years. It is clear in these last exchanges that the two humanists observe only polite formalities. Vives continues to show unfailing respect and veneration for his master, but of true friendship and affection there is little trace. In his strict orthodoxy Vives may have become more cautious about being associated with Erasmus, against whom charges of heresy were becoming more and more frequent. At the same time it seems clear that from the beginning Erasmus wished to avoid too close association with a *converso*. A clash of personalities and different conceptions of the new learning also contributed to their cool relations.

At any rate, almost immediately after Erasmus's death a group of prestigious publishers in Basel saw in Vives the new star in the humanistic firmament and commissioned new works and revised versions of older ones.<sup>26</sup> A flood of

<sup>26</sup> Cf. González, 'La recepción de la obra de Vives'.

writings poured from Vives's pen from 1536 to 1540, the year of his death, and in the next thirty years there were sixty editions of his works, produced either singly or in groups of works from this consortium of Basel publishers. They were then distributed to the rest of Europe through the biannual Frankfurt fair and were reprinted by other smaller printing firms throughout Europe, in Latin and in vernacular translations. Vives had come into his own.

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## ERASMUS AND CAPITO: THE TRAJECTORY OF A FRIENDSHIP

Erika Rummel

In 1529/30 Erasmus published two polemics against the Strasbourg reformers, with a number of passages aimed directly at one of their leaders, Wolfgang Fabricius Capito. It was the lowest point in Erasmus's relationship with a man he once described as his intellectual heir. In this paper I would like to explore the background of the controversy and examine the reasons for the rift between the two men.

Capito (1478–1541) obtained a doctorate in theology from the University of Freiburg in 1515. For the next five years he lived in Basel, where he served as cathedral preacher and taught at the university.<sup>1</sup> Capito made Erasmus's acquaintance when the latter came to Basel to prepare his New Testament edition for publication. Both men were members of the scholarly circle at the Froben Press. Erasmus of course was a star in the humanistic heaven, but Capito, too, commanded respect. He was, as Erasmus noted, 'no longer obscure, but well known among scholars for his writings'.<sup>2</sup> Capito was a rare example of a scholastically trained theologian embracing humanism. He studied the three biblical languages, which is the quintessential accomplishment of a humanist; he engaged in the characteristic activities of editing and translating; and, in his letters, he used the typical humanistic catchphrases, condemning the scholastics as barbarians and obscurantists. In fact, one might call Capito an Erasmian humanist, in

<sup>1</sup> For biographical information on Capito see Kittelson, *Wolfgang Capito*, and, for the Basel years, Stierle, *Capito als Humanist*, as well as the introduction to *CWC*, I, xvii–xlii.

<sup>2</sup> *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 142, ll. 502–03: '[n]ec tum erat obscurus Capito, sed lucubratiunculis suis nobilis erat apud eruditos'.

the way he linked the decline of piety with the decline of learning,<sup>3</sup> or in the way he criticizes the abuses of the church without challenging its teaching authority. He furthermore shared Erasmus's educational philosophy. In an essay entitled 'On the Formation of a Young Theologian' Capito promoted an approach strongly reminiscent of and indeed echoing Erasmus's *Ratio verae theologiae*.<sup>4</sup> Given these parallels, it is not surprising that in 1517 Erasmus acknowledged Capito as a kindred spirit and heaped extravagant praise on him when he wrote:

Prepare yourself, my excellent Fabricius, and seize the torch which I pass on to you! I have done as much as I could with my poor talent; you, I think, possess in an eminent degree what we see is needed for this splendid task. You are young in years, still vigorous and fresh; physically energetic and able to face hard work; you are equipped with a fertile mind, a man of keen judgment, with no ordinary skill in the three tongues, and sufficient gifts of style to adorn your subject and not merely convey it; you have a lofty spirit with no greater ambition than to be of service to the whole race of mortals [...] and above all you have a character so upright, a reputation so spotless that the most shameless purveyor of scandal would hesitate to speak ill of you. [...] In a word, all seems to me to promise the greatest success.<sup>5</sup>

Not content with this eulogy, which is fulsome even by the rhetorical conventions of his time, he added elsewhere that Capito was 'a man far more learned in Hebrew than Reuchlin', an assessment that raised eyebrows, given Reuchlin's status among Hebraists.<sup>6</sup>

After Erasmus left Basel in May 1516, the two men continued to correspond. Over the following four years, Capito remained a steadfast supporter of Erasmus

<sup>3</sup> See his preface to an edition of Josse Clichtove's *Elucidatorium* (1517), *CWC*, I, Ep. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Like Erasmus, Capito embarked on a programme of translating the Fathers, bringing out two works of Chrysostom in 1519 (cf. *CWC*, I, Epp. 27, 32). He promoted the study of biblical languages and published a Hebrew grammar (see the preface, *CWC*, I, Ep. 11). For his educational philosophy see his essay on the education of the theologian, *CWC*, I, Ep. 8.

<sup>5</sup> '[A]ge accingere, Fabrici optime, et hanc lampadem a nobis traditam accipe. Nos pro nostra infelicitate quod licuit praestitimus; tibi nihil non egregie suppetit quod ad hoc pulcherrimum facinus requiri videatur. Aetas integra et vicens etiamnum virensque: corpus vegetum ac laborum patiens: ingenium felix, iudicium acre, trium linguarum haud vulgaris cognitio, eloquentiae tantum quantum non sustinendo solum verumetiam illustrando negotio sufficiat: pectus ardens nec ullius rei appetentius quam bene merendi de mortalium universo genere [...] super omnia mores sic integri, fama sic illibata, ut nemo sit tam impudens sycophanta quem non pudeat male loqui de Fabricio [...] Quid multis? Omnia mihi pollicentur rem felicissime successuram': Allen II, Ep. 541. 95–103, 107–08, 132–33; *CWE* 4, ll. 105–20, 145–49, of 26 Feb 1517.

<sup>6</sup> '[V]ir Hebraice longe doctior Reuchlino': Allen II, Ep. 413. 14, of 5 June 1516.

and actively engaged in defending him against critics. He was involved in the publication of two Erasmian *apologiae*, one against Jacques Lefèvre in 1517, the other against Edward Lee in 1520, to which he added prefatory material.<sup>7</sup> Of course Capito benefited from being associated with the famous humanist — he uses the phrase *fructum capere*.<sup>8</sup> But it seems that Erasmus, in turn, benefited from his friend's expertise. Although Capito was no match for Erasmus's rhetorical skills, he excelled him in two other areas: Hebrew, and the fine points of doctrinal theology. Erasmus may well have consulted his friend in those areas. Capito at any rate claimed that he 'assiduously attended' Erasmus when he was preparing the New Testament edition (*assiduū tecum [...] intercessisse*), and Erasmus acknowledged that this was the case (*aderant assidue Capito et Oecolampadius*).<sup>9</sup> Erasmus himself knew next to no Hebrew and was not a graduate theologian. He had a doctorate from the University of Turin, but it was a degree granted *per saltum* — without the fulfilment of the usual requirements — and gave him no standing in the eyes of academic theologians. Erasmus's qualifications, or the lack thereof, became a focal point of attacks on his New Testament edition. He countered them by pointing out that, whatever his own qualifications, the edition had the approbation of professional theologians, among them, Wolfgang Capito. He continued citing Capito's approval even after their relationship deteriorated, because, he said, 'theologians don't want any books to be read except those that have been approved by one of them'.<sup>10</sup>

Capito's superiority in certain areas explains the tone of his letters to Erasmus. Although expressions of deference and praise are not lacking, the letters are not unduly flattering or fawning. Indeed Capito occasionally criticized Erasmus and had no scruples offering advice in the manner of a man who felt he was speaking to his equal. A letter dating from September 1516 is a good example. Erasmus had informed Capito of plans to revise the New Testament. Replying to his request for advice, Capito spoke candidly. He noted that Erasmus had completed the first edition in a 'rushed' manner (*properantior [...] cura*), which resulted in inconsistencies between text and annotations. He also thought that he had been too

<sup>7</sup> Capito added marginal remarks to Erasmus's apologia against Lefèvre (Basel: Froben, February 1518) and a prefatory letter to his apologia against Lee (*CWC*, I, Ep. 54).

<sup>8</sup> Allen, II, Ep. 459. 4–6.

<sup>9</sup> Allen II, Ep. 459. 123–25 (1516); VI, Ep. 1581, 232–23 (1525).

<sup>10</sup> *Erasmus, Spongia*, ed. by Augstijn, p. 142, ll. 519–20: 'ut theologorum clamores retundeam, qui nihil volebant legi, nisi ab ipsi probatum'.

outspoken in his notes and warned him to tone down certain remarks about ceremonies, sacraments, and monasticism.<sup>11</sup>

I would therefore characterize the relationship of the two men in 1520 as a mutually beneficial professional connection. Ulrich von Hutten saw Erasmus's praise of his younger colleague merely as back scratching. Erasmus eulogized Capito, he said, because the latter had praised his New Testament.<sup>12</sup> A fairer judge might say that the two men were linked by common interests in humanism and biblical studies. Mutual benefit was not the only reason for their cordial relationship. The two men shared an ideology as well. There also seemed to be a degree of personal affection. Erasmus acknowledged that Capito had charm (*morum suavitatis*, as he called it) and was a *vir pius et humanus*, a good and generous man.<sup>13</sup>

In May 1520 Capito's career took a new direction. He left Basel to enter the service of Albert of Brandenburg, Archbishop of Mainz. His official position was that of a court preacher. By October he was so busy handling the Archbishop's correspondence with the papal court in Rome that he delegated preaching to his disciple Caspar Hedio. We now find Capito addressed as 'councillor'.<sup>14</sup> Although it is not entirely clear whether he was formally appointed to Albert's council or merely attended it *ex officio*, in his capacity as court preacher, we can definitely say that he was close to Albert and, as he told Erasmus, 'had the prince's ear'.<sup>15</sup> It is at this time, however, that Erasmus begins to make references to Capito that are somewhat ambivalent. He muses about the danger of 'the world ensnaring Capito' and laments that he has turned into a 'complete courtier now'.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Allen II, Ep. 459. 48–78.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Expostulatio*, in Hutten, *Opera quae reperiri potuerunt omnia*, ed. by Böcking, II, 200–01: 'ob commendatum ab se tuum laborem effers; [Novum Testamentum] in coelum sustulerat: pulchrum ratio et digna quae te moveat ut immoderate faveas'. Cf. the response by Erasmus, *Spongia*, ed. by Augustijn, p. 142, ll. 516–23.

<sup>13</sup> 'Capitonem fateor amavi familiariter, visus est mihi tum vir pius et humanus' (Erasmus, *Epistola ad fratres Inferioris Germaniae*, ASD IX-1, 402, ll. 587–88).

<sup>14</sup> Ep. 1165 (6 December 1520) is addressed 'insigni theologo [...] Reverendissimi Card. Moguntini a consiliis' (Allen IV, p. 396). In a letter to Zwingli of 15 October 1520, Hedio reported that Capito had been made 'councillor' (*a consiliis*; Hutten, *Opera quae reperiri potuerunt omnia*, ed. by Böcking, I, 421).

<sup>15</sup> '[D]um sic habeam obsequentem Principem': Allen IV, Ep. 1241. 45–46 (14 October 1521).

<sup>16</sup> 'Capito totus est aulicus, et succedit illi res; sed nonnihil vereor nequid illum inescet hic mundus, si unquam alias, perversissimus': Allen IV, Ep. 1158. 19–21.

What were the reasons for the cooling of their relations in 1521? The year is of course a watershed in the history of the Reformation with Luther making his stand at the Diet of Worms. Given the fact that Capito and Erasmus ended up in separate confessional camps, it is tempting to conclude that it was the Luther Affair that cast a shadow over their relationship. Capito was an early supporter of Luther, referring to him enthusiastically as 'a second Daniel sent by Christ'.<sup>17</sup> In 1518 he persuaded Froben to publish a collection of Lutheran tracts, for which he himself translated a piece from German into Latin.<sup>18</sup> At that time, however, Capito's and Erasmus's views on Luther differed only by degrees. Erasmus was willing to concede that Luther was a man 'who breathed the spirit of a Christian', whose heart 'housed glowing sparks of the gospel teaching'.<sup>19</sup> At the same time he feared schism and was frustrated with Luther's radicalism, 'the savage torrent of his invective', and the outrageous pamphlets and bombastic threats of his followers.<sup>20</sup> Capito voiced similar concerns at that time, complaining about the 'Lutherans who were dealing with everything in an insolent rage and attacking everyone with biting arrogance'.<sup>21</sup> Given the similarities in their pronouncements, it is unlikely that the Luther Affair seriously affected their relationship in 1521. If we need further proof that Capito was still at one with Erasmus, we find it in his letters to Luther from the years 1518–21, in which he constantly refers the reformer to Erasmus and cites his advice.<sup>22</sup> Luther in turn coupled the two men in a sharply critical response to their pleas for moderation:

Erasmus's and Capito's opinions don't move me in the least [...]. [Erasmus] thinks we must treat everything and deal with everything in a civil, benevolent, and kind

<sup>17</sup> '[Q]uem plerique putant velut Daniele[m] quendam a Christo [...] missum': *CWC*, I, Ep. 19, 2–3.

<sup>18</sup> The edition was a bestseller, but Froben refrained from issuing a reprint. Apparently Erasmus had expressed reservations. He tells George of Saxony in a letter of 12 December 1524 (Allen v, Ep. 1526, 34–35) that Froben published Luther's works, persuaded by certain scholars, one of whom was Capito.

<sup>19</sup> However, he cautioned him against using radical methods, telling him that 'one gets further by courtesy and moderation than by clamour' (Allen III, Ep. 980, 38–39, 30 May 1519) and urging him 'to publish no sedition, nothing derogatory to the Roman pontiff, nothing arrogant or vindictive, but to preach the gospel teaching in sincerity with all mildness' (Allen IV, Ep. 1033, 50–53, 19 Oct. 1519).

<sup>20</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1202, 38–40, 54–56.

<sup>21</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1241, 6–7.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *WA Br*, I, nr 91; II, nrs 267, 447, especially Ep. 447 (pp. 416–17), where he cites Erasmus's advice at length ('Cui diligenter obsecutus, egi hactenus [...]'). See n. 25 below.

manner. [...] They refrain from reproaching, criticizing, and thus giving offence. That is why their writings are ineffective.<sup>23</sup>

The tensions developing in 1521, then, cannot be explained entirely by reference to the Luther Affair. The complete breakdown in their relations and the bitterness Erasmus manifests in the polemics of 1529/30 must be attributed to another cause, namely, a sense of betrayal.

In the 1520s Capito came increasingly under Luther's influence but he was less than candid about this development in letters to Erasmus.<sup>24</sup> He was working zealously on Luther's behalf, but was discreet about his activities. In March 1521 he wrote to Luther:

I thought I should aid you secretly. And it seems that this has had some effect [...] so far I have seen to it that my prince [Albert of Brandenburg] makes no rash decisions concerning you. I've left nothing untried in your service [...] and that hasn't exactly endeared me to the Romans.<sup>25</sup>

This is confirmed by Caspar Hedio, who told Zwingli that 'Luther would already have been burned in this region and the Lutherans excommunicated, had not Capito persuaded the Archbishop to act differently'.<sup>26</sup> Some of Capito's friends, then, were in the know, but Erasmus was not one of them. On the contrary, Capito deliberately kept him in the dark. Writing to Erasmus on 17 August 1522, he declared himself a supporter of the papal party, using the expression *nos pontificii*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *WA Br*, II, Ep. 429, p. 387, to Spalatin, 9 Sept 1521: '[N]eque Capitonis neque Erasmi iudicium me tantillum movet [...] omnia putat [*sc.* Erasmus] civili et benevolentia quadam humanitatis tractanda gerendaque [...] Igitur illorum scripta, quia abstinent ab increpando, mordendo, offendendo, simul nihil promovent'.

<sup>24</sup> Until 1519 he expressed his views quite openly, urging Erasmus to refrain from any public opposition to Luther. 'You know how influential you are', he wrote. 'Luther inspires our youth [...] Make sure that Louvain does not stand in his way. We shall keep Germany and Saxony at your service. The ruler of Saxony is a powerful patron of Luther; indeed he favours you and Luther equally. Nothing would please your enemies more than seeing you angry at Luther' (Allen III, Ep. 938. 3–9, 8 April 1519).

<sup>25</sup> *CWC*, I, Ep. 39 (*WA Br*, II, p. 416), 17 March 1521: 'putavi per cuniculos vobis utcumque subsidio esse. Et profecto quiddam effectum videtur [...] Cui diligenter obsecutus egi hactenus per meum Principem, ne quid in te maturius statueretur. Quid non tentavi Coloniae? Quid non sustinui, quo quomodocunque subsidio essem vestris copiis? Neque in hoc magnam gratiam emerui apud Romanos'.

<sup>26</sup> Hedio's letter to Zwingli is in *ZW*, VII, p. 355.

<sup>27</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1308. 9–10, 17 August 1522 (the same phrase, *nos pontificii*, also appears in a letter from Capito to Heinrich Agrippa, of April 1522, *CWC*, I, Ep. 136).

He also tried to deceive the papal legate Girolamo Aleandro, pretending that he was defending the Catholic church against the Lutherans: 'I did my duty the other day in Frankfurt, when I deliberately attacked some ranter, who was as unfair to you as he was biased in Luther's favour'.<sup>28</sup> Significantly, he ended his letter to Aleandro with the words: 'Serve my interests, since it is in your power to do so'.<sup>29</sup> In other words, Capito's duplicity was motivated by the hope for a reward. He was after the provostship of St Thomas in Strasbourg, and therefore thought it wise to depict himself as a staunch supporter of the papacy. Girolamo Aleandro saw through him, however. In a letter to the papal court, he supported Capito's candidacy, but only

to win him over [...] Once this favour is granted, I am sure that Capito will be ours. Even if he is not entirely ours, he will at any rate harm the Catholic cause less, if only with a view to his own interest and to keeping the provostship.<sup>30</sup>

When the pope appointed Capito to the provostship in 1522, Aleandro told him openly that he expected *quid pro quo*: 'If you imitate Luther and strive for revolution [...] the pope and the whole church will turn against you'.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout 1522 and 1523, Capito carefully groomed his public image and tailored his correspondence to the confessional affiliation of the recipient of his letter.<sup>32</sup> His hypocrisy reached its apex in the summer of 1523 when he wrote letters to Urbanus Rhegius and Erasmus respectively, containing sharply contradictory messages. In the letter to Rhegius he complained of the 'Roman perfidy' and struck out against 'hateful men who have no idea how much Luther benefited the world'.<sup>33</sup> In the letter to Erasmus, by contrast, he begs to be commended to the pope.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> '[S]um his diebus Francofordiae officio probe perfunctus, quando de industria conveni quendam clamatorem, ut iniquissimum Aleandro, ita Lutherio deditissimum'. See Kalkoff, *W. Capito im Dienste Erzbischof Albrechts von Mainz*, p. 134: CWC, I, Ep. 87.

<sup>29</sup> 'Vale et me serva, ut potes'. See Kalkoff, *W. Capito im Dienste Erzbischof Albrechts von Mainz*, p. 135: CWC, I, Ep. 87.

<sup>30</sup> Writing to Rome in February 1521. The text of the letter is in *Die Depeschen des Nuntius Aleander*, ed. by Kalkoff, p. 106.

<sup>31</sup> CWC, I, Ep. 149.

<sup>32</sup> It must be regarded as supreme irony that he warned Erasmus not to waffle: 'Beware, lest you incur the hatred of both parties while you attempt to retain their love'. ('Cave ne, utranque factionem retenturus in amore tui, in utriusque odium incidas.'): Allen v, Ep. 1308. 1–2, 17 August 1522.

<sup>33</sup> '[N]os quoque Lutherani dicimur ab illis autem omnium odiosissimis, qui omnium minime sciunt quid nam Lutherus profuerit orbi': CWC, I, Ep. 163.

<sup>34</sup> 'Tu me data occasione Pontifici commendes': Allen v, Ep. 1368. 26–27, a letter, written



A few days after writing to Erasmus, Capito took out citizenship in Strasbourg. This move amounted to a renunciation of obedience to the local bishop and was often preliminary to declaring one's adherence to the evangelical party. Taking that risk and revealing his sympathies was not a voluntary step, however. Capito's duplicity had been revealed through the unauthorized edition of a letter, which revealed him as a closet Lutheran.<sup>35</sup>

Capito heard of the publication of this letter in February 1523, while at the Diet in Nuremberg. He immediately travelled to Strasbourg to secure the provostship of St Thomas in person. He went no further that year, however, than taking out citizenship and waited until the following year to take a more decisive step: marrying the daughter of a city councillor and accepting a call from the reform-minded congregation of Young St Peter in Strasbourg (thus bypassing the Catholic hierarchy).

These developments must have stunned Erasmus. The realization that the man whom he had once described as steadfast and upright had deceived him no doubt shook his confidence, and poisoned the two men's relationship. He turned suspicious, and accused Capito of inciting others (Otto Brunfels and Heinrich Eppendorf) to write against him and revealing information given to him in confidence.<sup>36</sup> In a letter of 2 September 1524, he expostulated with Capito: 'Save such tricks for people who are ill disposed against you', and added a cryptic threat: 'You don't know what harm I can do.'<sup>37</sup> Later he vented his anger, accusing Capito

on 18 June, but dispatched together with Ep. 1374 (dated 6 July), where the request to be commended to the pope is less direct: 'If you wanted to lend your support with the Pope and the Reverend Francesco Chierogati, I predict all will be well' ('Quod si subsidio esse voles apud Pontificem et reverendissimum D. Fran. Chierogatum, auguror fore tranquillitatem', ll. 92–94).

<sup>35</sup> *WA Br*, II, nr 451, p. 431, 17 Jan 1522: 'Haec tua ratio est, quae iuxta nostram rationem pulchra adulatio et veritatis christianae abnegatio'. An anonymous defender of Capito rationalized his Nicodemism (apologia printed *WA Br*, II, p. 439): 'conditio et functio Capitonis prophana his literis fidem [...] ademit. [...] non enim continuo pugnat, qui iuvandarum evangelii partium init rationem diversam sed qui contrariam init'.

<sup>36</sup> Erasmus was at the time embroiled in a dispute with Hutten, who issued the *Expostulatio*, calling Erasmus a hypocrite and a faithless friend. Erasmus held Heinrich Eppendorf responsible for the publication and replied with the *Spongia*. This tract appeared after Hutten's death, and occasioned Brunfels's defence (Allen v, Ep. 1405, published as *Pro Ulricho Hutteno vita defuncto ad Erasmi Roterodami Spongiam responsio*, Strasbourg: Schott, 1524). For Erasmus's suspicions of Capito's complicity, see Allen v, Ep. 1437. 99–101 ('communicarit illi nostra arcana') and Ep. 1459, 61–69, VII, Ep. 1901, 8–9 (but cf. Ep. 1429, a complaint to the city council of Strasbourg about the printer, in which he refers them to Capito and Hedio as witnesses).

<sup>37</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1485. 3–7. Perhaps he made good on that threat by abandoning discretion



of *vafricies*, that is, cunning or clever machinations, and noted that ‘many people think very ill of Capito, and I do not have the best opinion of him myself’.<sup>38</sup>

Capito in turn began openly to criticize Erasmus’s theological positions, notably on free will and the Eucharist. He commented on Erasmus’s *De libero arbitrio*, saying that the work was undermining the gospel by ‘very freely promoting the flesh and human power’. It was his hope that Luther would ‘disperse such puffs of smoke’.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, he applauded Oecolampadius’s views on the Eucharist, which made Erasmus jump to the (wrong) conclusion that Capito had authored two anonymous pamphlets against him on this subject.<sup>40</sup>

The two polemics Erasmus published against the Strasbourgh theologians in 1529/30 rehearse some of these complaints and suspicions.<sup>41</sup> What interests us in the present context are two passages in which Erasmus defended the negative remarks he had made about Capito but at the same time tried to soften their impact.<sup>42</sup> He noted that he had not in fact spoken to Capito in seven years: ‘What [his] nature was then I could know to a certain extent, what [his] nature is now I do not know at all’.<sup>43</sup> He also downplayed the accusation of *vafricies*. It was not a grave reproach, he said. After all, he had applied the same word to St Paul in the sense of a pious cunning.<sup>44</sup>

and informing George of Saxony that Capito had been responsible for Froben’s edition of Luther’s works in 1518 and Girolamo Aleandro that Capito had spoken ill of him (Epp. 1482, 1526). Later, he accused Capito of having lent support to Gerard Geldenhouwer, whose unauthorized publication of extracts from his works he resented as an effort to connect him with the Reformation.

<sup>38</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1496. 69–70, 108–10.

<sup>39</sup> *CWC*, I, Epp. 221, 248. After reading Luther’s *De servo arbitrio*, he said he was impressed with the reformer’s arguments and convinced that they would stump Erasmus (*CWC*, I, Ep. 273).

<sup>40</sup> We now know that the pamphlets in question were by Zwingli and Leo Jud respectively: Allen vi, Ep. 1674. 67–69. The pamphlets are Zwingli’s *Franci cuiusdam epistola ad quondam civem Basiliensem* (*ZW*, VIII, Briefwechsel II, nr 401) and Jud, *Des Hochgelerten Erasmi von Rotterdam und Doctor Luthers maynung*.

<sup>41</sup> They are entitled *Epistola contra quosdam, qui se falso iactant Evangelicos* and *Responsio ad epistolam apologeticam [...] per ministros verbi ecclesiae Argentoratensis* (often cited as: *Epistola ad fratres Inferioris Germaniae*) published at Freiburg: Faber Emmeus, 1529 and 1530 respectively. Texts in *ASD* IX-1, 283–309 and 329–425.

<sup>42</sup> *ASD* IX-1, 390, ll. 367–71 and p. 412, ll. 832–34.

<sup>43</sup> *ASD* IX-1, 402, ll. 591–92.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. Allen III, Ep. 916. 363–99, *Rat. Ver. Theol.*, *LB*, v, 98F–99A, etc. In using the word Erasmus followed Jerome: cf. *ASD* IX-1, 391, note to l. 371. He might have added that Capito

We do not have Capito's reaction to Erasmus's polemic. It was Bucer who defended his colleague in an *Epistola apologetica*. Capito, he said, did not warrant the accusation of *vafricies*.<sup>45</sup> On the contrary, he had suffered persecution for his beliefs. Far from living in luxury, as Erasmus insinuated, Capito had relinquished his position as provost and was living in modest circumstances.<sup>46</sup> Bucer went on to accuse Erasmus of inconstancy:

Once you numbered among your friends Oecolampadius, Capito, Zwingli, Hedio, and many others. In what point have they changed for the worse? You will not be able to say anything specific against them unless you want to bring up the fact that earlier on they engaged in literary studies more freely and with greater applause from the world, whereas now they profess Christ [...] and are subject to unpopularity and live in great danger of losing their lives and possessions. Indeed, if a man is the better the more people he benefits and the closer he is to salvation, they have become much better men and have not at all changed for the worse.<sup>47</sup>

We have already discussed two potential reasons for the rift between Erasmus and Capito: doctrinal differences and a lack of trust. In the passage quoted Bucer hints at a third reason: a difference in cultural preferences. Erasmus was first and foremost a humanist; Capito was now exclusively a theologian. In this context, it is significant that Erasmus depicted the Lutheran movement as a threat, not only to the unity of the church, but also to the progress of humanism.

admitted to *vafricies* in a letter to Luther, construing his clandestine support as pious cunning, and that Erasmus himself had been accused of *vafricies* (without ameliorating qualification) by Otto Brunfels: 'Satis iam iudicii optimo cuique est, de ingenio tuo quid debeat sentire, dum vafre, inconstanter et lubrice agis omnia, ut nihil sit hoc nobis necesse digito monstrare' (Allen v, Ep. 1406. 138–40).

<sup>45</sup> Erasmus had written: 'Capito, the bishop of the new gospel, could think of no other pleasure or amusement than associating with that cursed swindler [Eppendorf]' ('Capito, novi Evangelii Episcopus, non habebat alias delicias quibus se oblectaret, quam perditissimi decoctoris convictu': Allen v, Ep. 1459. 61–63).

<sup>46</sup> *BOL*, I, 173, ll. 23–25: 'Nam non ignorat Erasmus, quae hic vir a mundo oblata prae Christo contempserit et a quo dignitatis gradu in quas se veritatis gratia sordes — ut vulgo iudicantur — sua sponte deiecerit'.

<sup>47</sup> *BOL*, I, 191, ll. 14–23: 'At habes quos inter amicos haud postremos ante numerasti: Oecolampadium, Capitonem, Zvinglium, Hedionem et plerosque alios; in quo iam isti obsecro degenerarunt? Nihil certe proferes nisi quod, cum antea liberiores et maiore cum favore mundi in literarum studiis versarentur, nunc Christum serio professi omnium malorum [...] odiis obnoxii sunt et in supremo rerum et vitae discrimine versantur. Nam si eo quisque melior est, quo pluribus est commodo et ad salutem inservit, sunt se ipsis hi non paulo facti meliores, nequaquam deteriores'.

In his polemics against the Strasbourgers Erasmus discussed the impact of the reformation on humanistic learning. The reformers, he said, were enemies of learning:

There are people in that group, who privately and publicly teach that the humanities are nothing but demonic snares, and these people have such influence that you rarely see anyone in that group [among the reformers] who seriously devotes himself to either sacred or profane studies.<sup>48</sup>

He maintained that 'the study of literature lapses wherever the new gospel rules' (*quotquot in locis regnat hoc novum evangelium, ibi frigere studia literarum*)<sup>49</sup> and challenged Bucer to 'name three people among the Lutherans who have made successful progress in literature!'.<sup>50</sup>

It is certainly true that Capito's interest in literature declined once he became engaged in the fight for the reformation in Strasbourg. The humanistic catch-phrases, so frequent in his writings before 1523, cease; he writes no more poems; and most of his published writings after 1523 are in German rather than in Latin. Although he cannot be accused of neglecting learning (he was actively engaged in organizing schools in Strasbourg), humanism was not the principal goal. Rather, he and his colleagues placed emphasis on producing qualified preachers and magistrates or more generally decent Christian citizens rather than polished orators or connoisseurs of literature.

The simmering hostility between Erasmus and the Strasbourg reformers, apparent in the 1529/30 controversies, continued for a few more years. In April 1531, Erasmus scoffed at Bucer's defence of Capito: 'He challenges me to say anything against Capito, as if I lacked material, if I allowed myself to play the buffoon, and put in writing what everyone is saying'.<sup>51</sup> Although he assured Bucer in March 1532 that he had no desire to make the Strasbourg theologians unpopular, he concluded with a cutting remark: 'Yet my opinion of your and Capito's

<sup>48</sup> ASD IX-1, 306, ll. 681–84: 'Atqui ex isto sodalitus extiterunt, qui priuatim ac publice docuerunt disciplinas humanas nihil aliud esse quam retia daemonum, tantumque profecerunt ut perquam raros in isto grege conspicias qui serio dent operam literis vel sacris vel prophanis'.

<sup>49</sup> ASD IX-1, 344, ll. 396–97; cf. Allen VII, Ep. 1977. 40–42.

<sup>50</sup> ASD IX-1, 344, 396.

<sup>51</sup> Allen IX, Ep. 2486. 30–32: '[p]rovocabat me ut dicerem si quid possem [...] in Capitonem: quasi mihi deessent quae dicerem, si mihi permetterem agere scurram, et quicquid vulgo iactatur in litteras mittere'.

integrity is not so high that I would entrust my soul to your beliefs'.<sup>52</sup> Thereafter, however, we notice a gradual rapprochement, brought on, perhaps, by Capito's translation into German of Erasmus's *De sarcienda ecclesiae concordia* (1533).<sup>53</sup> In the preface to that translation Capito praised Erasmus as an 'especially learned and skilled man [...] and foremost in understanding the teachings of faith' (ii<sup>r</sup>). He spoke with approval of Erasmus's moderation:

He proffers his opinion in a quiet and steadfast manner, indeed he does not fight against any party, but gently lays out what is good and what should be tolerated in each party. The reader should likewise reflect quietly and without prejudice and interpret everything in the best sense (ii<sup>v</sup>).

Although the rest of Capito's preface makes clear that there were serious doctrinal differences between them, he expresses the belief that religious peace could be achieved if Erasmus's formula were adopted, that is, 'if the opponents followed Erasmus's advice and tolerated us and stopped persecuting us, and instead faithfully promoted true salvation' (aii<sup>v</sup>). Erasmus did not respond officially (no response is extant at any rate), but Capito's praise must have mollified him and restored good will between the two parties. Two years later, in the spring of 1535, a certain Angelo Odoni visited Erasmus, presenting a letter of introduction from none other than Capito. Clearly therefore, a reconciliation had taken place. Odoni was an admirer of both Capito and Erasmus,<sup>54</sup> but prudently kept his most extravagant praise for Erasmus. He referred to Erasmus as the 'pure temple of the Holy Spirit [...] a most noble Christian who has done much for the Christian commonwealth', a 'rare miracle of the divine gift'.<sup>55</sup> Apparently Erasmus gave him a friendly reception, for Caspar Hedio thanked him on the Strasbourgers' behalf in a letter of May 1535.<sup>56</sup> The following year, Bucer and Capito were in Basel and

<sup>52</sup> Allen IX, Ep. 2615. 515–20: 'nec de tua nec de Capitonis integritate tam magnifice sentio ut hanc animulam sim in fidem vestram commissurus'. Shortly afterwards he sneers at Capito's good will: 'He teaches that one must not hurt the papists or compel them; one must simply pray to God to inspire their hearts' ('docet Papistas non esse ledendos aut cogendos: tantum orandum a Deo ut afflet illorum pectora': Allen IX, Ep. 2631. 66–68).

<sup>53</sup> For the translation see *Erasmus, Von der kirchen lieblichen vereinigung*, trans. by Capito.

<sup>54</sup> Odoni, who had studied medicine in Bologna, had come into contact with reformation ideas in Ferrara; he decided to abandon his profession and study theology and biblical languages in Strasbourg.

<sup>55</sup> Allen IX, Ep. 3002. 988, 995–96, 1014–15.

<sup>56</sup> Allen IX, Ep. 3020. 1–5.

paid a visit to Erasmus in person.<sup>57</sup> An eyewitness, Sigismund Gelenius, described their conversation as

bantering rather than serious. Finally Bucer mentioned the [religious] dispute. Erasmus, he said, was the only man who could have aided either party with his learned opinion, and that opinion would no doubt have prevailed. Then our friend said succinctly: 'Once you agree, I shall not disagree.' (*Ubi vos, inquit, fueritis concordēs, nec ego ero discors*).<sup>58</sup>

It is difficult to say what Erasmus meant with this remark. It may have been merely a polite phrase, but the fact that he received the two men would indicate that he was willing to forgive and forget.

To sum up: I have considered three reasons for the alienation between Erasmus and Capito, which led to the 1530 controversy: doctrinal differences, diverging cultural priorities, and a loss of trust. The doctrinal differences, especially on free will and the Eucharist, were a serious stumbling block to a continued friendship. It is also obvious that Capito no longer shared Erasmus's preoccupation with humanistic studies after 1523. Although he was concerned with education, his goals were as narrow as Erasmus intimated. Little common ground was left, then, but in my opinion, the most important reason for the breakdown in their relations was the deception Capito practised on Erasmus in the early twenties and the resulting loss of trust. We may conclude that Capito's trespasses against the laws of friendship did not completely rob him of Erasmus's goodwill, but they certainly put an end to the intimacy, which is the marrow of friendship.

<sup>57</sup> They attended the meeting of the reformed Swiss cities (Jan/Feb 1536), which resulted in the first Helvetic Confession. It was Bucer's and Capito's intention to level the differences between the Lutheran and Swiss confessions.

<sup>58</sup> 'Nuper post synodum salutavit eum una cum Capitone Bucerus. Confabulatio fuit festiva magis quam seria. Tandem Bucerus iniecit mentionem dissidii istius. Illum unum virum esse, cuius diserta sententia alterutri libet parti accessisset, eam dubio procul praeponderaturum. Hic noster compendio: Ubi vos, inquit, fueritis concordēs, nec ego ero discors.' The full text of the letter is in Clemen, 'Briefe aus Basel an Melanchthon'.

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# LA RELATION ENTRE ÉRASME ET LE DUC GEORGES DE SAXE AU COURS DES ANNÉES 1520: RÉFORME DE L'ÉGLISE ET ENGAGEMENT THÉOLOGIQUE

Marie Barral-Baron

La correspondance qu'entretient Érasme (1467–1536) avec le duc Georges de Saxe (1471–1539) de 1517 à 1531 est, par plusieurs aspects, tout à fait singulière. 31 lettres de cette correspondance — 21 épîtres d'Érasme au duc; 10 épîtres du duc à Érasme — nous sont parvenues, toutes regroupées pour la première fois dans l'édition de P. S. Allen. Rarement étudiée, cette relation épistolaire permet pourtant de saisir à la fois le rapport de l'humaniste de Rotterdam à la chronologie des faits de la Réforme et la manière dont il se situe face à eux.<sup>1</sup> L'événement réformateur se déploie en effet tout au long des années 1520, sous les yeux d'Érasme, depuis l'excommunication de Luther (1521) jusqu'au passage au protestantisme de la ville de Bâle (1529). Et Érasme, douloureusement, essaye de réagir à l'actualité de la Réforme. Car c'est bien là toute la difficulté de cette décennie des années 1520 pour l'humaniste: réajuster sans cesse sa ligne de conduite devant cet événement inattendu mais dans la genèse duquel il est largement impliqué. La correspondance qu'il entretient avec le duc est à ce titre significative: elle démontre avec force l'incapacité d'Érasme à se situer immédi-

<sup>1</sup> Peu d'ouvrages récents sur le sujet sont effectivement disponibles: on peut consulter la thèse de doctorat de Reichel, 'Herzog Georg der Bärtige und Erasmus', Lehmann, 'Herzog Georg von Sachsen in Briefwechsel mit Erasmus', et Ribhegge, 'Die Kontroversen zwischen Luther, Erasmus und Herzog Georg von Sachsen'; voir également des travaux anciens sur le duc Georges de Saxe: Welck, *Georg der Bärtige, Herzog von Sachsen*, et Vossler, 'Herzog Georg der Bärtige'. Voir aussi *CEBR*, III, 205–08.

atement face à la révolution luthérienne. En refusant de réagir, en tardant à prendre la plume contre Luther, Érasme trahit une certaine angoisse du temps et un refus évident de la chronologie de son siècle.<sup>2</sup> Sa réputation de lâche, de veule, a sans doute beaucoup puisé dans cette relation épistolaire. Pourtant, cette réaction tardive aux événements de la Réforme, ne signifie pas de la part d'Érasme, un désintérêt pour l'histoire de son temps et encore moins une insensibilité aux concepts de tradition et de continuité. Au contraire même: face à cet événement inédit qu'est en 1520 la Réforme, il n'y a ni codes, ni *habitus*. Érasme et le duc réagissent chacun à leur manière, en fonction de leur vécu, de leurs affects, de leur histoire personnelle passée et de leurs responsabilités présentes. Plongés brutalement au cœur des événements réformateurs, ils dévoilent chacun une perception de la temporalité de la Réforme différente, comme décalée. Or, c'est justement ce décalage qui est intéressant: il permet, et c'est l'objectif de cet article, de saisir l'appréhension qu'a Érasme de l'événement historique de la Réforme.

### *Une correspondance au cœur de la Réforme*

Il faut tout d'abord situer le contexte de cette correspondance afin de mieux saisir le problème que rencontrent les deux épistoliers dans leur acception de la chronologie des faits. Cette correspondance s'inscrit en effet en plein cœur de ce début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à la fois par les espaces géographiques qu'elle traverse, les événements historiques qu'elle évoque et les protagonistes centraux du temps qu'elle met en scène.

La singularité de la correspondance que s'échangent Érasme et le duc Georges de Saxe tient en partie au fait que les lettres du duc conduisent Érasme au cœur même de l'espace géographique où se déroulent les premiers soubresauts de la Réforme, en Saxe. Les dix épîtres conservées du duc ont été en effet écrites soit à Dresde (8 d'entre elles) soit à Leipzig (2). Provenant de Saxe, ces épîtres apportent à Érasme des informations de première main sur les événements qui se déroulent dans cette région épicerie de la Réforme. Cette relation épistolaire devient ainsi très vite précieuse pour Érasme qui satisfait ainsi, dès 1520, son désir d'information sur le progrès de la Réforme. C'est le duc qui débute la relation épistolaire en janvier 1517 en envoyant à Érasme un court billet pour le complimenter après la publication du *Novum Instrumentum* et de ses *Annotationes*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Barral-Baron, *L'Enfer d'Érasme*.

<sup>3</sup> Allen II, Ep. 514. 1–5.



Érasme fait très vite écho à ce courrier en dédicaçant son édition de Suétone — publiée à Bâle en 1518 chez Froben — à Georges et à son cousin Frédéric de Saxe.<sup>4</sup>

Du fait de leur qualité informative, les lettres du duc sont attendues avec impatience par Érasme et bientôt même avec fébrilité car nombre d'entre elles ne parviennent pas à leur destinataire. C'est le 5 décembre 1522 qu'Érasme, inquiet devant l'inhabituel silence du duc, se lamente ouvertement sur les problèmes de courrier.<sup>5</sup> Georges de Saxe n'a en effet pas encore donné de réponse à la missive érasmienne du 3 septembre dernier.<sup>6</sup> Érasme incrimine alors les brigands ou les luthériens opposés au duc. Dans le contexte événementiel tendu des années 1520, les deux hommes adoptent alors l'usage courant qui est qu'en cas de désordre du courrier, les destinataires font le point, en début de lettre, sur les épîtres envoyées précédemment et fournissent au besoin les copies de ces dernières.<sup>7</sup> À partir du mois de mai 1524, les lettres égarées, volées entre Dresde et Bâle deviennent d'ailleurs si nombreuses qu'Érasme supprime son adresse sur ses épîtres afin de brouiller les pistes aux luthériens.<sup>8</sup> Cette correspondance est ainsi intimement liée aux événements du temps, scandée même par la chronologie des temps forts de la Réforme. En l'étudiant, on observe que si cette relation épistolaire est d'abord une correspondance d'apparat entre 1517 et 1521, elle prend une tournure toute autre autour de 1522 lorsque le duc demande à Érasme d'intervenir dans le conflit de la Réforme. Il y a alors une inflation du nombre de courriers échangés. 1524 est ainsi une année d'intense relation épistolaire autour de la publication du *De libero arbitrio*. Dans les années suivantes, le rythme de la correspondance diminue, mais la relation épistolaire s'intensifie systématiquement lors d'événements politiques ou intellectuel majeurs. Ainsi, Érasme et Georges de Saxe s'écrivent au sujet de la guerre des Paysans (1524–25), de la ligue de Dessau (1526) et de la publication des deux volumes de l'*Hyperaspistes* (1527 et 1529). Les lettres du duc trouvent rapidement une place de choix dans les éditions épistolaires d'Érasme. Dans son recueil intitulé *Epistolae ad diversos* publié en 1521, Érasme insère par exemple une de ses épîtres adressées au duc — datée du 31 juillet 1520 — lettre qui bien entendu lui permet de souligner ses liens étroits avec un prince séculier de haut

<sup>4</sup> Allen II, Ep. 586. Voir toute la lettre.

<sup>5</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1325. 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1313.

<sup>7</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1448. 6–10.

<sup>8</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1448. 1–14. Voir aussi Allen v, Ep. 1462. 1–3.

rang.<sup>9</sup> Érasme se dévoile ainsi comme un homme de son temps qui manie avec une rare dextérité et lucidité les usages et pratiques épistolaires.<sup>10</sup>

Dans leurs échanges, Érasme et Georges n'oublient jamais l'identité de leur correspondant. Ils sont soucieux l'un comme l'autre de rédiger des épîtres en conformité avec le rang et la dignité du destinataire. Érasme, faut-il le rappeler, est alors en 1517 au sommet de sa gloire: il vient de publier son *Novum Instrumentum* accompagné des *Annotationes* (1516) mais aussi une édition de Saint Jérôme et il continue de compléter ses *Adages*. Ce n'est pas par hasard que le duc le surnomme 'la lumière du monde' (*lumen mundi*) dans un courrier de 1517.<sup>11</sup> Érasme n'a alors jamais autant mérité son surnom de 'prince des humanistes'. Face à lui dans cette relation épistolaire, se dresse le duc Georges de Saxe dit 'le barbu', cousin de l'Electeur Frédéric le Sage, beau-frère du landgrave Philippe de Hesse.<sup>12</sup> En 1517, lorsque débute leur relation épistolaire, Georges est duc de Saxe et a déjà gouverné la Frise pendant douze années.<sup>13</sup>

Érasme est très conscient du fait qu'il s'agit de la seule correspondance qu'il entretient sur le long terme avec un prince séculier. De ce fait, il s'emploie à maintenir le lien, à s'en montrer digne. Lorsque le duc lui fait parvenir par exemple, au mois de juillet 1520, trois pépites d'argent extraites des monts métallifères du Sud-ouest de Dresde, Érasme s'écrit: 'Venant d'un tel prince, il n'est rien qui ne me serait plus précieux! Je ferai en sorte que tu ne sembles pas avoir obligé un ingrat!'.<sup>14</sup> Il y a bien entendu des 'accidents' dans cette relation épistolaire, lorsque l'un ou l'autre des épistoliers cède à un coup de sang par exemple — le duc ne supportant plus l'attitude passive d'Érasme devant les événements réformateurs ou l'humaniste ne tolérant pas davantage l'insistance avec laquelle le duc lui demande de prendre la plume contre Luther.<sup>15</sup> Mais ces 'accidents' trahissent

<sup>9</sup> Erasmus, *Epistolae ad diversos*. Voir également Allen IV, Ep. 1125; Halkin, *Erasmus ex Erasmo*.

<sup>10</sup> Bénévent, *Érasme épistolier*.

<sup>11</sup> Allen II, Ep. 514. 1–5.

<sup>12</sup> *CEBR*, III, 205–08.

<sup>13</sup> Georges de Saxe est gouverneur du landgraviat de Thuringe et du margraviat de Misnie, qui était alors le pays de Meissen, margraviat indépendant de l'électorat de Saxe. Il apparaît comme étant un des princes d'Allemagne les plus formés et les plus expérimentés pour accomplir une telle tâche.

<sup>14</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1125. 52–54: 'Quamquam mihi nihil non erat preciosissimum futurum quod a tali Principe venisset. Enitar ne penes hominem ingratum hoc beneficii collocasse videaris'.

<sup>15</sup> Allen VI, Ep. 1550. 23–25; VIII, Ep. 1983. 5–10.

finalement le fait que, fondamentalement, le fonctionnement de cette correspondance repose avant tout sur le respect mutuel. Car ces deux 'princes' partagent, en dépit de réactions opposées voire inconciliables à l'histoire immédiate, un certain nombre de points communs qui facilitent et permettent même sans doute la poursuite de leur correspondance.

L'échange entre les deux hommes se tisse tout d'abord sur l'arrière plan commun d'une formation ecclésiale. Différente dans la forme — Georges a grandi à la cour de Vienne, Érasme chez les frères de la Vie Commune — celle-ci reste sur le fond similaire. Tous deux étaient destinés à la prêtrise et ont donc reçu une excellente formation théologique. Érasme a été ordonné prêtre en 1492, Georges chanoine de Mayence en 1484. Cette formation initiale commune permet un dialogue facile, presque évident. Ce n'est pas Érasme s'adressant à François I<sup>er</sup> ou, mieux encore, à Charles Quint. De manière significative d'ailleurs, ils ne se moquent jamais l'un de l'autre. Nous sommes loin ici des railleries érasmiennes sur 'l'esprit flamand' (*flandricum ingenium*) du futur Charles Quint.<sup>16</sup>

Outre une formation similaire, Érasme et Georges appartiennent à un univers intellectuel semblable. En 1517, tous deux savent que l'Église a besoin de réformes et ils ne cachent ni l'un ni l'autre leurs sympathies respectives pour le jeune moine saxon. En 1519, c'est d'ailleurs le duc qui contraint une université hésitante à accueillir la dispute de Leipzig et c'est encore lui qui offre son château comme lieu de rencontre, au mépris de l'opposition de l'évêque de Merseburg. C'est enfin une curiosité intellectuelle et un souci commun des belles-lettres qui réunit les deux hommes. Érasme ne cesse de dépeindre le duc comme un exceptionnel défenseur des belles lettres à l'université de Leipzig,<sup>17</sup> et Georges tente à plusieurs reprises de faire venir Érasme dans cette même université.<sup>18</sup> Les turbulences causées par la Réforme finissent par perturber cette excellente relation qui, à partir de 1521, n'est plus sans nuages.

<sup>16</sup> Allen II, Ep. 412. 55–56.

<sup>17</sup> Allen III, Ep. 948. Voir également Allen IV, Ep. 1125. 19–22. Érasme se plaît à rappeler dans ses épîtres combien d'excellents professeurs humanistes, sous la protection du duc Georges de Saxe, se succèdent à la chaire de grec de Leipzig: Richard Croke, Pierre Mosellanus et Jacques Carmina.

<sup>18</sup> Allen II, Ep. 527 et 533; voir également Allen III, Ep. 809.

*Dans cette correspondance, un but: réagir*

Cette correspondance met clairement en évidence ce que les contemporains d'Érasme mais aussi l'historiographie ont longtemps — et toujours — reproché à Érasme: son attitude dilatoire, ses temporisations, bref, pourrait-on dire, sa lâcheté. De ce fait, cette relation épistolaire permet d'étudier, au travers des pressions exercées sur Érasme et des réponses de celui-ci, la 'maxime d'action' de l'humaniste.

L'un pousse, l'autre résiste. Voilà de quelle manière nous pourrions résumer la relation épistolaire du duc et d'Érasme dans les années 1520. C'est le duc qui pousse Érasme à intervenir dans le conflit réformateur; c'est Érasme qui résiste de toutes ses forces aux demandes répétées et très exigeantes du duc: 'Enfin', écrit l'humaniste, 'j'ai toujours eu la conviction que cette tragédie ne saurait mieux s'assoupir que par le silence'.<sup>19</sup> Georges de Saxe veut en effet faire agir Érasme le plus tôt possible et ses pressions s'exercent alors — et ce de manière significative — à l'occasion d'événements clés, de moments importants du processus réformateur. Le duc impose en fait une chronologie à Érasme et celui-ci se dérobe, arguant par exemple de sa mauvaise santé ou de son horreur de la sédition.<sup>20</sup> Le 9 juillet 1522 par exemple, le duc demande pour la première fois à Érasme de prendre la plume contre Luther. Pressé par une atmosphère électrique depuis la publication par le moine saxon de deux nouveaux opuscules, le duc vient en plus d'être directement insulté par Luther. Dans un sermon à Wittenberg, le 7 mars 1522, ce dernier a en effet qualifié le duc Georges de 'bouffon' et de 'Prince insensé et bouffon': Georges de Saxe réclame alors, de la part d'Érasme, une action immédiate, une ré-action aux événements qui leurs sont contemporains à tous deux. Il exige que l'humaniste soit enfin en phase avec l'actualité, qu'il colle à l'événementiel:

Allons, très savant Érasme, pour l'amour du Christ Jésus, consacre donc à cette affaire les forces lumineuses de ton génie pour que la bouche de ce personnage impudent et inconsidéré soit si bien bouchée, qu'il ne puisse plus, dans l'avenir, abuser impunément et librement de sa licence téméraire et sacrilège contre les choses sacrées.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1313. 58–59: 'Postremo semper in hac fui sententia, tragoediam hanc nulla ratione melius consopiri posse quam silentio'.

<sup>20</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1313. 53–54, 47–50.

<sup>21</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1298. 30–35: 'Age igitur, Érasme doctissime, et pro Christi Iesu amore ingenii tui preclaras vires omnis huic rei accomoda; huc omnes dicendi scribingue neruos tende, quo tandem huiusmodi illi tam impudenti et temerario ita per te obstruantur ora, ne deinceps tam impune tamque licenter in rebus sacris temeraria ac prophana sua abutatur licentia'.

Et il ne ménage pas ses efforts en joignant notamment à son courrier les deux derniers livres de Luther qui circulent alors en Saxe en langue allemande.<sup>22</sup> Mais Érasme ne fait rien.<sup>23</sup> Le face à face entre les deux épistoliers se durcit alors encore un peu plus au cours des années 1522–24 devant le refus poli mais ferme d'Érasme, à chaque courrier, d'intervenir. Il faut du temps à l'humaniste pour comprendre que l'année 1520 a définitivement modifié le paysage religieux du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Si l'année 1520 a été pour Érasme celle du choc de l'événement-Réforme, l'année 1524 est sans nul doute pour l'humaniste celle de la prise de conscience que Luther n'est définitivement pas un mal nécessaire que l'Église peut absorber au bout d'un certain temps.<sup>24</sup> Au duc qui lui annonçait, le 25 janvier 1523, son intention de mettre fin à ses pressions:

Parce que nous aussi nous avons été personnellement insulté par ce sauvage, ensuite parce que tu te refuses à cela pour tant de motifs, nous cesserons de t'encourager, de peur d'être accusé soit d'être désireux de tirer quelque vengeance, soit de rouler un rocher vers un torrent,<sup>25</sup>

Érasme répond en explicitant sa première lecture des événements, son décalage temporel:

C'est que, à l'examen, Luther m'apparaissait, quelle que soit la valeur de sa doctrine, être un mal nécessaire dans les affaires de l'Église en tous points si corrompues; et de ce remède, amer et violent il est vrai, je souhaitais que sortît quelques bonnes guérisons dans le corps du peuple chrétien.<sup>26</sup>

Mais il est trop tard en 1524 pour justifier son absence dans l'arène. Dès lors, le duc et, avec lui, nombre de ses contemporains, font d'Érasme l'emblème du lâche, du veule et ce définitivement. Le 21 mai 1524, Georges de Saxe signifie d'ailleurs clairement à l'humaniste ses sentiments:

<sup>22</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1298. 22–25.

<sup>23</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1313. 84–85.

<sup>24</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1313. 44–46.

<sup>25</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1340. 8–12: 'Proinde, imprimisque cum et nos nominatim atroci simus ab ipso affecti iniuria, in posterum te ad hoc quod tot rationibus recusas, cohortari cessabimus, ne aut vindictae alicuius cupidi arguamur, aut versus torrentem saxum voluamus'.

<sup>26</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1495. 7–11: 'Deinde quod perpenderem Luterum, qualis qualis est eius doctrina, quoddam esse necessarium malum in undique corruptissimis Ecclesiae rebus; atque ex eo pharmaco, quamvis amaro ac violento, optabam ut aliquid bonae sanitatis nasceretur in corpore populi Christiani'.

Ah! Si Dieu, d'autre part, t'avait donné, il y a 3 ans, cette volonté de te distinguer de la secte luthérienne! Et si tu t'en étais distingué de façon à démontrer, en publiant quelque écrit contre ceux-là, qu'il n'y avait absolument rien de commun entre eux et toi et qu'il existait un profond désaccord entre vous! Combien il aurait été plus facile, en effet, d'éteindre le feu quand il venait à peine de s'enflammer que de le vaincre maintenant qu'il s'est propagé en un si vaste incendie. Voilà pourquoi cette faute, pour dire mon sentiment, retombe sur toi et même principalement.<sup>27</sup>

Pourtant, la prise de conscience tardive d'Érasme de la nécessité d'une réaction de sa part face à la Réforme ne vient pas d'une erreur d'analyse ou d'un manque de courage.

Face à cet événement inédit qu'est la Réforme au début des années 1520, chacun fait comme il peut avec ce qu'il a. Or, ce qu'a Érasme en 1520 c'est sa connaissance de la Bible, de la patristique, de l'histoire de l'Église. Et il réagit avec: les analogies historiques qui parsèment ses lettres témoignent du fait qu'Érasme ne lit pas seulement la Réforme comme un fait du présent, mais aussi et surtout comme un événement qui s'inscrit dans le temps long, celui de l'histoire, d'ailleurs toujours très mouvementée, de l'Église. Le duc certes manie aussi l'analogie historique dans sa correspondance avec Érasme mais celle-ci, même lorsqu'elle est identique à celle de l'humaniste, n'a en fait jamais une signification semblable. Pour le duc, l'analogie permet de signifier à Érasme qu'avant lui, des hommes de foi vénérables qui incarnent aujourd'hui la Tradition et desquels Érasme se prétend l'héritier, ont su être acteurs de leur temps. Le duc cite donc les Pères pour faire sentir à Érasme que la Réforme est un événement d'exception, une rupture inédite face à laquelle il faut réagir; Érasme, lui, nomme les Pères pour souligner au contraire que les crises dans l'histoire de l'Église ne sont pas nouvelles et qu'il faut savoir garder son calme. L'analogie avec Saint Hilaire est, à ce titre, particulièrement significative. Érasme cite en effet abondamment Hilaire pour affirmer que nul ne peut condamner son attitude silencieuse face aux exactions et hérésies puisque les Pères ont fait de même avant lui: 'Sur le fait que je n'ai jusqu'ici réfuté aucune théorie de Luther dans un opuscule particulier', écrit-il le 21 septembre 1524, 'je te ferai remarquer qu'Hilaire s'est tu plus longtemps quand les Ariens se

<sup>27</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1448. 33–40: 'Iam vero utinam ante triennium hanc tibi mentem Deus dedisset, ut a factione Lutherana te seiunxisses! Et ita seiunxisses ut edito aliquo aduersus illos scripto, plane nihil tibi cum ipsis commune esse, et dissensionem grauem intercedere testatus esses! Quanto enim facilius fuerat inardescentem etiamnum flamman restinguere, quam nunc, postquam in ingens adeo incendium euasit, extingueret! Ea itaque culpa, ut dicam quod sentio, ad te vel imprimis pertinet.'

rendaient maîtres du monde' ou encore le 12 décembre 1524,<sup>28</sup> répétant la même idée: 'Il n'y a pas lieu de critiquer ici mon hésitation alors que saint Hilaire hésita plus longtemps avant de dégainer la plume contre les Ariens'.<sup>29</sup>

L'analogie historique permet ici à l'humaniste de rappeler que l'Église a déjà traversé et surmonté avec succès de nombreuses crises et de souligner que les Pères de l'Église ne se sont pas forcément mobilisés immédiatement pour y mettre un terme. L'événement réformateur n'est finalement qu'une péripétie supplémentaire à l'échelle de l'histoire du christianisme: l'Église du Christ est forte de siècles de Tradition et de continuité évangélique. Mais cela le duc, pressé par l'actualité, ne l'entend pas. Ce qui prime pour lui, en 1522, ce n'est pas d'avoir le sens de la Tradition ou le souci de la continuité mais bien de réagir immédiatement. Et, très habilement d'ailleurs, il renverse le parallèle tracé par Érasme avec Hilaire: 'Nous ne doutons pas que, de même qu'Hilaire élimina l'hérésie arienne en rompant un long silence, tu ne puisses, toi, vaincre la luthérienne'.<sup>30</sup>

Le duc s'inscrit ainsi définitivement dans l'action tandis qu'Érasme privilégie le sens de l'histoire: ils ne se comprennent tragiquement pas. Car le sentiment d'Érasme est qu'il a agit depuis longtemps, qu'il a même réagit dès 1520 à la Réforme non pas en dénonçant, comme le souhaite le duc, les hérétiques du temps, mais en protégeant les Pères: c'est saint Augustin et saint Basile qu'Érasme publie comme acte de résistance à la Réforme. Le décalage entre Érasme et le duc est flagrant, définitivement.

### *Temporalité de la perception de la Réforme chez Érasme*

Au fil du déroulement de la chronologie des événements réformateurs, Érasme comprend que le duc a raison: il lui faut intervenir. C'est ainsi en 1524 et non en 1522 comme le lui demandait Georges — qui lui a déjà, entre temps, fait éditer et traduire plusieurs pamphlets anti luthériens — qu'Érasme agit enfin avec la pub-

<sup>28</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1499. 21–23: 'Quod hactenus nullum Lutheri dogma peculiari libello refelli, diutius tacuerat Hilarius Arianis orbem occupantibus'.

<sup>29</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1526. 122–24: 'Non est igitur quod quisquam hic reprehendat meam cunctationem, quum lentius cunctatus sit diuus Hilarius antequam in Arianos stringeret calamum'.

<sup>30</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1520. 38–41: 'Nec dubitamus quin, ut Hilarius rumpendo diutinum silentium Arrianam heresim suppressit, ita tu poteris vincere Lutheranam, et pestifera illius paradoxa extirpare profligareque'.

lication du *De libero arbitrio*.<sup>31</sup> Mais, même dans sa réaction au présent, Érasme n'est toujours pas dans la même temporalité que le duc: ce n'est pas à la Réforme de 1524 qu'il réagit mais bien plutôt à celle qu'il a enfanté lui-même en 1516 et qui est devenue ce monstre qu'affronte depuis maintenant quatre ans le duc au jour le jour.

Lorsque Érasme se résout en effet enfin, au bout de quatre années de pressions intensives du duc en ce sens, à faire œuvre de polémiste, c'est immédiatement sur le terrain de la continuité chronologique et de la Tradition évangélique qu'il se place. Avec son *De libero arbitrio*, Érasme ne publie pas en effet d'abord un manifeste antiluthérien, mais un ouvrage qui lui permet de se placer dans la continuité des Pères. Tous ont défendu la doctrine du Libre arbitre. Tout le texte est ainsi une immense défense de la patristique mise à mal par Luther et un appel à la défense de la Tradition catholique.<sup>32</sup> Le serf arbitre luthérien est, aux yeux d'Érasme, mauvais puisque discontinu et s'opposant à la Tradition. Érasme n'agit donc pas — et ce point est fondamental bien que jamais souligné — en fonction de la chronologie actuelle, de l'actualité de la Réforme mais en fonction des analogies qu'il établit entre cette actualité et l'histoire de l'Église. À l'origine de sa réaction, il y a non pas un refus de l'histoire immédiate, comme cela est souvent dit, mais bien un profond enracinement dans l'histoire ecclésiastique.

À peine imprimé, Érasme envoie un exemplaire de son *De libero arbitrio* au duc.<sup>33</sup> Si Georges le félicite, il exprime d'abord ses regrets que ce livre n'ait pas été publié bien plus tôt: il aurait sans doute, selon lui, empêché certains esprits fragiles de passer dans le camp des luthériens. Il se fait désormais tard pour écrire de tels opuscules même s'ils peuvent toujours sauver quelques âmes.<sup>34</sup> Ce qui importe ainsi en premier lieu au duc c'est la lutte au présent: il n'a pas le sens de l'histoire d'Érasme.

Pourtant, au fil du temps, Georges de Saxe fait sienne cette temporalité érasmiennne décalée. Même si son premier objectif reste jusqu'au bout d'empêcher que la Saxe passe au luthéranisme, il partage chaque jour davantage avec Érasme le

<sup>31</sup> Georges de Saxe a interdit la distribution du Nouveau Testament de Luther dans son duché et il fait diffuser, en réponse au moine saxon, la version allemande de l'humaniste Jérôme Emser (1477–1527) pour laquelle il a rédigé la préface. Le duc a également publié un *Traité sur l'Eucharistie*: voir Allen VII, Ep. 1951.

<sup>32</sup> Gorce, 'La Patristique dans la réforme d'Érasme'.

<sup>33</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1495. 21–22. L'exemplaire de la *Diatribè sive Collatio de libero arbitrio* (septembre 1524) est joint par Érasme à la lettre qu'il adresse le 6 septembre 1524 au duc Georges de Saxe.

<sup>34</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1503. 6–21; voir également Allen v, Ep. 1520. 12–28.



souci de la continuité évangélique. Et, comme contaminé par le sens de l'histoire d'Érasme, il lui écrit en octobre 1524: 'Ainsi donc, nous t'exhortons avec le plus grand soin à vouloir défendre le point de vue des Anciens et de l'Église catholique respecté pendant tant de siècles et le délivrer et le sauver des arguties impies et criminelles'.<sup>35</sup> En 1531, Érasme dédie d'ailleurs au duc la traduction des *Orationes* de Grégoire de Nazianze par Willibald Pirckheimer (1470–1530), comme un ultime signe de leur solidarité évangélique.<sup>36</sup>

Mais si ces deux hommes paraissent se retrouver à la fin des années 1520, comment expliquer ce décalage que vivent Érasme et Georges de Saxe, entre 1520 et 1531 au moins, dans leur appréhension respective de la temporalité de la Réforme? Au fil des années 1520, il semble que le duc découvre l'événement réformateur au fur à mesure de son développement. Novice, il lit toutes les publications de Luther et de son entourage, les fait parvenir au plus vite à Érasme, réagit au quart de tour aux provocations du moine saxon, l'insulte, le combat; Érasme, lui, paraît reconnaître au fil des jours son enfant déformé dans les pamphlets et les sermons de Luther. Il dit ne pas lire et même ne pas savoir lire les livres du réformateur en langue allemande, ouvrages dont il connaît de toute manière le contenu: c'est, selon lui, sa prose déformée des années 1510, mal comprise, portée aux extrêmes. En 1516, en publiant son *Novum Instrumentum* accompagné des *Annotationes*, Érasme a en effet ouvert le chemin à Luther: il ne découvre ainsi jamais la Réforme de la même manière que le duc: il y a réactions décalées parce qu'il y a lectures différentes — et inconciliables — des événements. Son rapport à la chronologie des années 1520 ne peut être celui du duc. Au mois de septembre 1522, l'humaniste essaie d'ailleurs un peu confusément de le faire sentir au duc:

Et de fait s'il m'est permis de m'adresser librement à un prince non moins sage qu'humain, je lui rappellerai que le monde était endormi parmi les dogmes de la scolastique et les petites intrigues humaines; qu'il n'entendait plus parler que d'indulgences, de compromis et de la toute-puissance du Pontife romain.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1503. 10–17: 'Atque ut intelligas ex animo nos iudicare, mittimus hic ipsius Lutheri libellum De Votis; de quibus cum et vernacula lingua nefanda scripserit, mirum quot animas offenderit atque e monasteriis ad prostibula coegerit. Ut ergo et illis atque aliis, qui adhuc vota reddunt sed tamen dubitant, succurratur, hortamur te summopere ut quoque in hoc veterum et Catholice Ecclesiae sententiam tot seculis observatam defendere atque ab impiis ac infandis argutiis vindicare et asserere velis.'

<sup>36</sup> Allen ix, Ep. 2493. Cette lettre sert de préface à Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Orationes*, éd. et trad. par Pirckheimer.

<sup>37</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1313. 21–24: 'Etenim si libere loqui fas est apud Principem non minus prudentem quam humanum, mundus indormiebat opinionibus scholasticis, constitutiunculis

C'est donc lentement et tragiquement que l'humaniste prend conscience du poids de ses propos de jeunesse, certes sincères, mais tellement naïfs. Érasme semble s'être rêvé dans les années 1510 comme complètement hors du temps, en contact direct avec les Pères et il se rend compte alors brutalement en 1520 qu'il est, lui aussi, comme ses contemporains, être et sujet d'histoire. C'est comme si la révolution luthérienne avait ouvert les yeux à Érasme non pas sur les erreurs qu'il a pu faire — car ce n'est ni le sujet ni le cas — mais sur des positions théologiques dont il ne voyait pas en 1516 tous les tenants et aboutissants. Luther lui permet en fait de mûrir sa pensée tout en restant fidèle à lui-même. D'où l'impossibilité d'Érasme à intervenir dans un camp comme dans l'autre. Il n'est effectivement en accord avec aucun des deux et se dit uniquement fidèle du Christ comme il aime à le répéter. Au duc de Saxe qui lui reproche, avec les franciscains de Cologne, d'avoir 'cuvé les oeufs qu'a pondu Luther', Érasme confie, interloqué, à son ami Jean Caesarius:

Moi, j'ai pondu un œuf, Luther l'a fait éclore. Singulier propos de ces frères Mineurs et digne d'une table bien garnie et de qualité.<sup>38</sup> Moi, j'ai pondu un œuf de poule, Luther a fait éclore un poussin absolument différent.<sup>39</sup>

Ce n'est donc pas qu'Érasme comprenne moins vite que le duc les événements, qu'il se sente moins concerné, mais c'est qu'il doit, d'une part, comprendre et supporter l'actualité religieuse contemporaine qui lui fait violence — et ce comme tous ses contemporains — mais aussi faire l'effort, d'autre part, de replacer les faits des années 1520 dans sa chronologie personnelle, les resituer, faire le lien entre ce qu'il a lui-même dit et écrit en 1516 et ce que Luther revendique et applique en 1520. Et cet effort là, qui demande du temps, n'appartient qu'à lui. Cette correspondance fonde donc la thèse de l'Érasme lâche, veule, qui se réfugie dans sa tour d'ivoire au cours des années 1520; mais lue attentivement, elle montre aussi le poids de l'analogie historique dans le comportement d'Érasme, l'erreur de perspective qui est à l'origine de cette image de lâcheté. Ce n'est pas seulement au

humanis, nec aliud audiebat quam de indulgentiis, de compositionibus, de potestate Pontificis Romani.

<sup>38</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1528. La traduction littérale du passage est: 'digne d'une abondante et bonne bouillie'. La bouillie, lat, *puls*, était la nourriture des pauvres à l'époque romaine. Le mot fait peut être ironiquement allusion à la pauvreté absolue des franciscains qui vivaient d'aumônes et prêchaient l'Évangile aux pauvres.

<sup>39</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1528. 11–14: "Ego peperì ouum, Lutherus exclusit". Mirum vero dictum Minoritarum istorum, magnaue et bona pulte dignum. Ego posui ouum gallinaceum Lutherus exclusit pullum longe dissimillimum.

miroir des événements des années 1520–24 qu'il faut lire l'action d'Érasme, mais, dans la mesure où lui — à la différence de Luther — ne se situe pas dans la rupture, au regard de l'ensemble de l'histoire ecclésiastique. C'est cette dernière qui fonde la réaction ou la non-réaction d'Érasme face à tel ou tel événement de la Réforme. En conclusion, nous pouvons nous demander si cette correspondance ne donne pas finalement à voir deux attitudes possibles face à la Réforme au cours des années 1520. D'un côté, le duc Georges de Saxe qui prend immédiatement acte des paroles de Luther, de son excommunication par le pape, de sa nouvelle ecclésiologie et qui décide de le combattre immédiatement. Par ce choix, le duc se situe dès 1520 dans la rupture. Il a pris acte de la discontinuité historique revendiquée par Luther pour pouvoir mieux le combattre. De l'autre côté, Érasme, 'Prince des humanistes', semble postuler lui et ce au moins jusqu'en 1524, une continuité qui n'existe plus. Les affirmations luthériennes ne le font jamais rompre avec sa conception antérieure — évangélique, moralisatrice, épurée — du christianisme mais s'opposent à sa foi purement scripturaire en niant la Tradition au nom de la sainte rupture. Si Érasme est incapable, à la différence du duc, de condamner d'emblée ou radicalement (puisqu'elle lui doit tant) la révolution protestante, il l'est cependant aussi de l'approuver puisqu'elle rompt avec une Tradition chrétienne dans laquelle Érasme situe de plus en plus, à la fin des années 1520, la vérité religieuse. Nullement historien, mais penseur de la situation de la foi dans le temps, la Réforme, au cours de deux décennies dramatiques qui ont profondément ébranlé Érasme, permet à l'humaniste de mieux apprécier combien la vérité religieuse s'inscrit définitivement dans le temps, c'est-à-dire dans l'histoire.

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Section III.  
Literature and Philosophy in the  
Renaissance Republic of Letters



## POLIDORO VIRGILI, ERASMO E LA *RESPUBLICA LITTERARIA*

Romano Ruggeri

**I**l carteggio tra Erasmo e Polidoro Virgili, che copre il periodo 1521–32, non traccia soltanto la storia di una amicizia all’inizio polemica, poi consolidata e ininterrotta sino alla morte di Erasmo, ma indica i presupposti, le motivazioni e soprattutto le finalità culturali di quel legame. Già nella prima generazione di umanisti fiorentini, come ci ricorda Vespasiano da Bisticci: ‘Era tanta la congiunzione dell’amicizia di tanti degni uomini che radi di erano ch’egli non si trovassero insieme per la similitudine dei loro costumi’.<sup>1</sup> La ‘similitudine dei costumi’ stava alla base della *societas litterarum*, quella che, secondo l’illustre umanista Guarino Guarini, è propria delle persone di cultura, di tutti quelli che si occupano delle lettere. La stretta familiarità che si stabiliva tra gli umanisti, derivava da comuni interessi letterari; Lorenzo Valla elencava, tra le più importanti condizioni necessarie agli studi, la *litterarum consuetudo*: la frequentazione di persone istruite. Il far parte di una *élite* era dagli umanisti considerato come un risultato conseguente al possesso delle lettere e del sapere. Tutti gli umanisti erano consapevoli che gli *studia humanitatis* o le *litterae humanae* erano il mezzo, lo strumento ideale per formare l’uomo completo. Una nota costante della letteratura umanistica era proprio la formazione di una comunità, di cui le lettere costituissero l’elemento fondante. Lo stesso rapporto che gli umanisti posero tra sé e le opere degli scrittori classici, caratterizzò il loro metodo e il loro insegnamento. Gli antichi e mirabili scritti non erano considerati soltanto opere d’arte formalmente perfette, ma erano la vera sostanza degli uomini egregi, in cui riconoscere una comune umanità. Anche il Medioevo conobbe gli antichi autori, ne tra-

<sup>1</sup> Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le vite*, a cura di Aulo Greco, II, p. 218.

scrisse le opere e ne tramandò codici preziosi; tuttavia, molto spesso li deformò, facendone un uso improprio e strumentale. Gli umanisti invece, e questa era la vera novità storico-critica, cercarono di coglierne il senso originario ed autentico. Ora, la domanda di fondo, è questa: è possibile ravvisare, attraverso l'analisi comparativa tra il carteggio e le tematiche specifiche dei due umanisti (Erasmus e Polidoro), una sorta di percorso parallelo e un progetto umanistico comune, volti a promuovere finalità condivise, sia nel campo della riforma degli studi, sia in quello della riforma dei costumi e di un nuovo stile di vita della Chiesa?

Intanto diciamo subito, da un punto di vista ambientale, che è singolare il fatto che entrambi, abbiano avuto un privilegiato rapporto con l'Inghilterra, una delle Corti più splendide del Rinascimento europeo. Erasmus vi soggiornò a più riprese, mentre il Virgili vi abitò ininterrottamente per cinquant'anni, salvo tre brevi viaggi in Italia. Entrambi contarono gli stessi amici inglesi con i quali intrattennero rapporti di stima, di studio e di collaborazione. Quando nel 1502 Polidoro Virgili giunse in Inghilterra al seguito del cardinal Adriano da Corneto, come sottocollettore del denaro di S. Pietro, fu accolto molto amorevolmente dal re Enrico VII e fu gratificato da laute prebende.<sup>2</sup> Nel 1506 Polidoro ricevette dal sovrano l'incarico di scrivere la storia dell'Inghilterra e svolse un importante ruolo di mediazione politica. La cosa non sorprende se si pensi alla storia ininterrotta di rapporti tra la Corte di Urbino e quella inglese sancita dal conferimento dell'ordine della giarrettiera da parte del re Edoardo IV al conte Federico da Montefeltro nel 1474; onorificenza poi conferita da Enrico VII anche all'erede di Federico, Guidubaldo I, nel 1504. Questi inviò in segno di gratitudine, una ambasceria presso la Corte inglese guidata da Baldassar Castiglione che, nella circostanza, illustrò la figura del duca d'Urbino con un memorabile discorso; soprattutto durante il pontificato di Giulio II, che aveva stretto rapporti di parentela con i Montefeltro, Polidoro svolse un importante ruolo di mediazione tra il Papato e le principali monarchie europee. Dell'umanista urbinato ci limiteremo a delineare alcuni tratti essenziali della sua biografia, utili ad illustrare la sua personalità storica e culturale e la sua collocazione nella *Respublica litterarum*. Il Virgili nato nel contado di Urbino nel 1470, si era formato all'università di Padova e successivamente aveva seguito le lezioni di Filippo Beroaldo a Bologna; egli si era seg-

<sup>2</sup> Su Polidoro Virgili, a partire dalla prima fondamentale monografia di Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, negli ultimi cinquant'anni sono stati prodotti in Europa e in America studi importanti riguardanti sia opere di rilevanza storica (*Anglica Historia*) che letteraria (*De Rerum Inventoribus, Adagia*). Nel 2000 si è celebrato a Urbino un Convegno internazionale su Polidoro Virgili e la cultura umanistica europea. Qui ci limitiamo a segnalare alcuni degli studi più importanti: Virgili, *Beginnings and Discoveries*, ed. Weiss; Ruggeri, *Polidoro Virgili*; Virgili, *On Discovery*, ed. Copenhagen; Bacchielli, ed., *Polidoro Virgili e la Cultura umanistica europea*.



nalato presso la comunità degli umanisti con una nuova edizione critica (l'ottava) del *Cornu copiae* di Niccolò Perotti (1496), il filologo più consumato e più dotto dei suoi tempi. La scelta del Virgili per il suo esordio letterario, non poteva certo considerarsi casuale, sia per i rapporti intercorsi tra Perotti e il duca Federico di Urbino, sia per le aspettative che tale opera aveva alimentato tra gli studiosi del Quattrocento. L'edizione virgiliana del *Cornu copiae*, costituiva una prova generale nel contesto di tutta la produzione letteraria del Virgili. Rispetto alle edizioni precedenti, Polidoro aveva aggiunto un bifoglio che era stato dimenticato da Ludovico Odasio nella prima edizione del 1489. Essa costituì la base per le successive edizioni e ristampe; si consideri che il Manuzio riproducesse in quarantuno casi le varianti introdotte dal Virgili. L'analisi comparativa di cui abbiamo parlato, evidenzia il primo degli elementi caratterizzanti il tipo di approccio alle opere dei classici: la filologia. La migliore conferma dell'importanza dell'opera perottina veniva proprio da Erasmo, il quale, nel *Dialogus Ciceronianus*, attraverso il dialogo tra Buleforo e Nosopono, così si esprimeva. 'Buleforo: E Filippo Beroaldo? Lo vedo, scuoti il capo, ma l'avevo previsto. Nosopono: No, anzi, io lo piego in segno di assenso se tu mi esalti l'uomo che ha dei meriti illustri nello studio delle lettere'.<sup>3</sup> Il commento degli epigrammi di Marziale, approntato dal Perotti, consisteva in una analisi filologica delle parole, del loro significato, dei derivati, dei sinonimi e dei contrari. Si trattava in sostanza di uno studio enciclopedico, esteso ad ogni aspetto dell'esperienza umana. Ma furono le prime due opere originali, pubblicate a distanza di un anno l'una dall'altra, che inserirono l'urbinate nella comunità umanistica: il *Proverbiorum libellus* (Venezia: Cristoforo De Pensis, 1498) e il *De Rerum inventoribus* (Venezia: Cristoforo De Pensis, 1499). La prima lettera del carteggio, quella di Erasmo a Polidoro, è datata 23 dicembre 1520. L'apertura è dedicata alla nota polemica riguardante la priorità degli *adagia*; essa cadeva in un momento difficile per Erasmo, che era stato oggetto di continui attacchi e di critiche da parte di E. Lee, che contestava alcuni passi del *Novum Instrumentum*. Come Lee nel caso dell'edizione critica del Nuovo Testamento, così, secondo Erasmo, Polidoro cercava ora di sottrargli l'onore che gli derivava dalla pubblicazione degli *Adagia*. Erasmo, in quel momento di scoramento, si era così lamentato con l'amico 'O te hominem inclementem!'<sup>4</sup> Ma le cose stavano realmente così?

<sup>3</sup> Erasmus, *Dialogus Ciceronianus*, in *ASD* 1-2, 666, ll. 12-14: 'BUL. Quid Philippum Beroaldum maiorem? Video, abnuis, id sciebam fore. NOSOP. Imo annuo, si mihi commendas hominem de litterarum studiis praeclare meritum'.

<sup>4</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1175. 1.

### *La polemica degli Adagia*

Nel giugno del 1500 usciva a Parigi per i tipi di Giovanni Philippi la prima edizione degli *Adagia* di Erasmo. Prescindendo per il momento da ogni giudizio di merito sulla natura e finalità dell'opera erasmiana, si può affermare che Erasmo era consapevole di essere stato il primo a pubblicare una raccolta di proverbi derivati dai classici: 'Apud latinos' — scriveva in una lettera a W. Blount Mountjoy nel giugno 1500 — 'nemo quidem ante nos (quod sciam) huiusmodi negocium tentavit'.<sup>5</sup> E, in occasione della terza edizione dell'opera (1513) tralasciando l'inciso dubitativo 'quod sciam', non sappiamo quanto dovuto a un'effettiva indagine conoscitiva, non esitava a ribadire la sua convinzione 'cum primus apud Latinos argumentum hoc attentarim'.<sup>6</sup> E' molto probabile che Polidoro avesse portato con sé a Londra sia la seconda edizione del *Proverbiorum libellus* (settembre 1500), sia il *De Rerum inventoribus* in tre libri, facendosi conoscere ed apprezzare tra gli umanisti inglesi. La contemporanea diffusione delle due raccolte di *adagia*, per giunta nel giro degli stessi amici, può aver dato luogo a valutazioni, discussioni e confronti. Infatti già dal 1501 Erasmo aveva inviato in Inghilterra cento copie degli suoi *adagia*; ma in una lettera a John Colet del dicembre 1504, egli si lamentava di non aver ancora ricevuto il denaro, nonostante che fossero trascorsi tre anni 'Et scripsi nuper, et meministi opinor, de centum adagiorum libris nostro sumptu in Angliam transmissis, idque ante triennium'.<sup>7</sup> Le prime notizie di una incipiente polemica, ancora indiretta, sono contenute in una lettera di Erasmo a Guglielmo Budé del febbraio 1517. La polemica, tuttavia, fin dall'inizio, non aveva minimamente compromesso l'amicizia tra i due, anzi l'aveva rafforzata. Erasmo definiva Polidoro 'vir eruditus mihi nunc amicissimus'. Quel *nunc* tuttavia faceva riferimento a vivaci discussioni sorte tra i due che non si erano del tutto sopite; il Virgili rivendicava soltanto una precedenza temporale, alla quale non intendeva rinunciare. Erasmo, da parte sua, lamentava che Polidoro l'avesse definito plagiatario; un'accusa per la verità non proveniente dal Virgili, ma da un nemico di Erasmo, un mediocre teologo di Lovanio, ancor più insidiosa e maligna 'Asseverabat me' — protestava Erasmo — 'alienis inventis ostentare me'.<sup>8</sup> Insomma che l'umanista olandese, come una cornacchia, si fosse rivestito di piume altrui. La sorpresa e il disappunto di Erasmo, esternati nella

<sup>5</sup> Allen I, Ep. 126. 95–96.

<sup>6</sup> Allen I, Ep. 269. 58.

<sup>7</sup> Allen I, Ep. 181. 61–62.

<sup>8</sup> Allen II, Ep. 531. 417–18.

lettera a Budé, riemersero in occasione della stampa della nuova edizione degli *Adagia* del Virgili per i tipi di Froben. I rapporti tra il Virgili e l'editore tedesco erano tenuti da Erasmo, che fungeva da direttore editoriale, il quale si mostrò prodigo di consigli per la migliore riuscita della stampa e per alcuni aspetti legati alla commercializzazione e alla diffusione del prodotto editoriale. Erasmo si era dimostrato, come in passato, amico fedele e disponibile in tutto, ma riteneva che la lettera dedicatoria a Richard Pace in apertura del *De Rerum inventoribus*, tornando ancora a rivendicare la priorità dei suoi *Adagia* ('Polidorus tuus apud latinos primus huiusce rei argumentum attentavit') potesse in qualche modo mettere in discussione, presso i lettori, l'autenticità e la sincerità della loro amicizia.<sup>9</sup> Non era in gioco il prestigio culturale e morale di Erasmo; anzi, il fatto che egli avesse seguito le sue orme, rappresentava per l'urbinate un motivo d'orgoglio: 'succesorem habui nostrum Erasmum, id quod ob singularem hominis doctrinam pergratum fuit'.<sup>10</sup> Ma rimaneva il fatto incontrovertibile — insisteva l'urbinate — della priorità della sua raccolta, avendo egli pubblicato il *Proverbiorum libellus* nel 1498 ed Erasmo invece i suoi *Adagia* nel giugno 1500. Pur ammettendo la buona fede di Erasmo ('Etsi ille eiusmodi commentarioli nostri minime sciens') non si poteva in alcun modo alterare, secondo Polidoro, la verità ei fatti.<sup>11</sup> L'intransigenza e la *vis* polemica dei due sulla questione, si tradusse paradossalmente, su suggerimento di Erasmo, in un duplice impegno: da un lato, evitare di fornire ai nemici un pretesto per dividerli e, dall'altro, rinsaldare 'veterem inter nos actam vitae consuetudinem et adamatam ingenii tui festivitatem'.<sup>12</sup> Erasmo, come in passato, assicurava di adoperarsi sinceramente nel tutelare la stima e la fama dell'amico 'Tu mihi sic charus es ut haud dubitaturus sim vel de meo largiri plus gloriae, quam tu quereris mihi praeter ius vindicare'.<sup>13</sup> Egli però chiedeva a Polidoro, in occasione della imminente edizione frobeniana del *De Rerum inventoribus* di omettere, nella lettera dedicatoria a Richard Pace, solo i passi relativi alla polemica riguardante la priorità degli *Adagia* e i riferimenti elogiativi nei confronti di Edward Lee. La lettera si chiudeva con parole di elogio nei confronti del *De Rerum inventoribus*; (con una valutazione assai positiva ...); infine, dopo aver ricordato i comuni amici inglesi, Erasmo invitava il Virgili a seguire i loro dotti consigli e, soprattutto, a promuovere strenuamente le lettere.

<sup>9</sup> Virgili, *Adagiorum liber*, Lettera dedicatoria a Richard Pace.

<sup>10</sup> Virgili, *Adagiorum liber*.

<sup>11</sup> Virgili, *Adagiorum liber*.

<sup>12</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1175. 10–11.

<sup>13</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1175. 16–18.

## *L'humanitas*

Il fatto che nel medesimo periodo entrambi avessero pensato a una raccolta di *Adagia*, all'insaputa l'uno dell'altro, dimostrava la grande considerazione e importanza attribuita dai due umanisti alle *bonae litterae*, sia nel campo dell'insegnamento scolastico e universitario, sia in quello della formazione umanistica. Lo scopo degli *Adagia* era, secondo Erasmo, 'Persuadere, adornare, informare'. Le perle di saggezza degli antichi scrittori erano il mezzo migliore per insegnare ai giovani allievi le basilari cognizioni del latino; solo dopo, essi sarebbero stati in grado di esprimere se stessi. Anche i *Colloquia* erano nati con la medesima finalità; la grammatica, ad esempio, liberata dalle involuzioni filosofiche della Scolastica, (pensiamo all'uso improprio della grammatica modale) tornava a svolgere il doppio ruolo di disciplina indispensabile per scrivere e parlare correttamente e insieme di strumento di lettura e di comprensione dei classici. Conoscere il significato autentico di una parola, significava anche conoscere la cosa; nella conoscenza *res et verba* tornavano ad identificarsi, dopo la netta separazione che il sistema della *lectio* aveva introdotto e sanzionato. Infatti, in quella prospettiva, si era perduto l'aggancio con la realtà, con le *res* del mondo. Lo sapeva bene Erasmo che aveva dedicato alla formazione dei giovani opere fondamentali. Ad uno sguardo sinottico delle due raccolte di *Adagia*, non sfugge la comune finalità didattica ed educativa; nella sua prefazione agli *Adagia*, il Virgili indicava il tipo di approccio metodologico-critico che non consisteva soltanto nel *colligere*, come Erasmo aveva esternato nella sua lettera, ma in un approccio critico estremamente rigoroso. Vale la pena di citare l'intero passo:

Quibus deinde collectis, maior profecto eorum sensus abstrusos explicandi superfluit labor; quod ut melius efficerem pro virili operam dedi et unde nata sint et quare in proverbia cesserint et ex quo auctoritate veterum scriptorum docere, quorum etiam apposite nonnulla loca partim correximus, partim enodavimus.<sup>14</sup>

Come si vede, il punto di partenza era una esigenza storico-filologica: ridare agli antichi il loro volto e alle parole il vero significato. Dopo aver indicato il suo metodo di lavoro, Polidoro si rivolgeva ai giovani che erano i veri destinatari degli *Adagia*. Egli era consapevole della novità didattica ed educativa rappresentata dagli *Adagia*, rispetto a testi e manuali del passato; ma l'umanista urbinato segnalava anche lo scetticismo, l'ostilità e la resistenza degli antichi maestri: 'Veniet fortasse tempus, optimi adolescentes, cum tam maxime vos iuvabit

<sup>14</sup> Virgili, *Proverbiorum libellus*, Lettera dedicatoria a Guidubaldo I.

audire atque attendere animum vestrum ad hunc nostrum adagiorum librum, quam minime vestros praeceptores vobis aliquando legere pigebit'. Lo scopo della raccolta era duplice: 'Ornandae orationis' e 'Rationes bene instituendae vitae'.<sup>15</sup> Anche Erasmo perseguiva le stesse finalità, come risulta chiaramente dal titolo dei *Colloquia* che così recita 'Familiarium colloquiorum formulae per Erasmum Roterodamum, non tantum ad linguam puerilem expoliendam, verum etiam ad vitam instituendam'.<sup>16</sup> La via della conoscenza era tutta giocata tra *res*, *verba* e *mores*, tra linguaggio, realtà e costumi; il Petrarca, che era considerato il primo degli umanisti, aveva affermato che lo studio delle lettere non si fonda sulle parole e men che meno sui sillogismi, ma sui fatti; non è 'Verborum [...] ars, sed vitae'.<sup>17</sup> La critica moderna, a proposito delle fonti della *Collectanea* di Erasmo, ha sostenuto che l'olandese non utilizzò il *Proverbiorum libellus* di Polidoro, benché vi siano almeno un centinaio di proverbi comuni.

Ma altri studiosi hanno invece ipotizzato la possibilità che Erasmo si sia servito del testo di Polidoro in edizioni successive, quella ad esempio del 1515. Verifiche comparative condotte su alcuni proverbi comuni, sembrano confermare questa tesi: ne fa fede l'inserimento di fonti antiche e contemporanee, assenti nella *Collectanea erasmiana*, che compaiono invece nel *Libellus* di Polidoro. Il professor Cueto ha individuato diverse similitudini esistenti nella struttura di alcune glosse, problemi di critica testuale e interpretazioni di significato.

In particolare, egli segnala l'evidente somiglianza testuale di alcuni proverbi erasmiani come ad esempio, il proverbio 'Perdere nulum stultum est' (*Adagia*, no. 2476) con la glossa di Polidoro (*Libellus*, no. 11) e la coincidenza in 'Similis Bacalo' (*Adagia*, no. 513; *Libellus*, no. 32) della discussione su come dovesse essere la corretta lettura *Bachia*, *Bacelum*, *Baceolum* (*Adagia*, no. 1521).<sup>18</sup> Si può affermare che le due raccolte di *adagia* furono soggette, nello svolgere degli anni, a un continuo lavoro di limatura stilistica, di arricchimento e di nuove accessioni da parte dei loro autori. Trattandosi di proverbi simili, va da sé che non possano essere escluse influenze reciproche, e che, anzi, esse furono molto probabili. Anche Polidoro, nelle edizioni successive del *Proverbiorum libellus*, che prese il titolo definitivo di *Adagiorum liber*, inserì nuovi adagi che contengono modifiche e aggiunte apportate da Polidoro, tenendo presente la raccolta erasmiana. Come, ad esempio, nel caso dell'adagio: 'Navigasti usque ad Phasim' (*Libellus*, no. 119);

<sup>15</sup> Virgili, *Adagiorum aequae humanorum ut sacrorum opus*, dedica ai giovani lettori.

<sup>16</sup> Erasmus, *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae*.

<sup>17</sup> Francesco Petrarca, *Familiares*, XVII, I, 7-16.

<sup>18</sup> Serrano Cueto, 'El Erasmismo de Polidoro Virgilio'.

Polidoro si limita a citare Strabone senza riferire il testo. Nell'edizione del 1521 egli amplia il testo nel quale il geografo chiarisce che si tratta del fiume *Fasis* della Colchide e non della città rivierasca che porta lo stesso nome. Tutto ciò è riportato tale e quale dall'adagio 'Ad Phasim usque navigavit' (*Adagia*, no. 1349) di Erasmo, dove la somiglianza risulta evidente.

### *La pietas*

Fin dal 1499, l'anno del suo primo soggiorno inglese, Erasmo era rimasto profondamente colpito dalle lezioni sulle lettere di S. Paolo tenute da Colet; egli ne subì il fascino ascoltando le sue prediche nella chiesa di S. Paolo, quando lo reincontrò nel 1510. All'invito di Colet, nel 1499, di far lezione ad Oxford sulla Genesi e altri libri della Bibbia, Erasmo aveva allora opposto un rifiuto, non ritenendosi all'altezza del compito, data la sua scarsa conoscenza della lingua greca. Ma nel 1505 egli era in grado, data ormai la sua padronanza della lingua, di dedicarsi allo studio delle S. Scritture. Cresce in quegli anni negli ambienti umanistici europei l'interesse filologico per la Bibbia, che assume una importanza centrale. Possiamo dire che l'umanista diventa teologo; egli, senza rinnegare il passato, cambia il corso della sua vita, volgendolo dal secolare al sacro. E' proprio in quegli anni che Erasmo pubblica il manoscritto delle *Annotationes* di Lorenzo Valla; nella prefazione al testo, egli contestava le obiezioni di coloro che pretendevano che solo il teologo e non il filologo potesse esercitare una critica della Vulgata. Anzi, l'olandese accentuava l'importanza del filologo per una lettura corretta del Nuovo Testamento. A ben riflettere, egli si faceva portavoce di una esigenza diffusa tra gli umanisti riformatori, quella, poi clamorosamente affermata e rivendicata da Lutero nel 1520, del libero esame delle Sacre Scritture.

Il 1521 segnò l'inizio di una nuova stagione di studi e vide anche la partecipazione del Virgili al dibattito europeo che si concretò in una serie di contributi importanti che videro la luce tra il 1521 e il 1525. Rispettivamente i cinque libri (IV-VIII) della nuova edizione, in otto libri, del *De Rerum Inventoribus*, che vanno sotto il titolo *De Institutione Religionis Christianae*; una nuova edizione dell'*Adagiorum liber* arricchito di *Adagia sacra*, che si aprivano con l'adagio programmatico 'Iustus ex fide vivet'; infine, nel 1524, la pubblicazione del commento al *Pater*. Nel 1516 Erasmo aveva pubblicato la prima edizione del *Novum Instrumentum*, una nuova versione del Nuovo Testamento, corredata della versione latina, del testo greco e di un apparato critico. La tendenza primaria tra gli umanisti era quella di fornire una nuova dottrina apologetica della fede cristiana su basi filosofiche (Pico-Ficino), su basi scritturistiche (Valla-Erasmo) e, infine, su basi storiche (Virgili). Il pro-

gramma comune di questi umanisti era quello di operare il passaggio dalla teologia scolastica alla teologia biblica; l'intento era quello di giungere alla pietas attraverso le *litterae*. In altri termini, perché 'cum bonis litteris floreat sincera pietas'.<sup>19</sup>

L'esegesi filologica faceva parte della strategia generale di Erasmo e degli umanisti a lui legati, per risvegliare la filosofia cristiana, instaurando un cristianesimo critico e al tempo stesso pio. La filosofia di Cristo era una vita, non l'oggetto di riflessioni e di sillogismi; in primo luogo, la sua critica si rivolgeva agli aspetti cerimoniali del culto, della struttura esteriore della religione, a favore di un contenuto interiore. Le argomentazioni di Erasmo si rivolgevano principalmente contro il mal vezzo di considerare la religione come una continua celebrazione di riti: riti che non solo non rinnovano l'anima, ma sono inutili e dannosi. Così scriveva Erasmo, in una lettera a Colet verso il 1504, chiarendo il senso dell'arte della religiosità:

Non ho scritto l'*Enchiridion* per mettere in mostra il mio ingegno o la mia eloquenza, ma per guarire dall'errore coloro che fanno comunemente consistere la religione in cerimonie peggio che giudaiche ed in riti di carattere materiale, e trascurano le cose che hanno attinenza alla vera religiosità.<sup>20</sup>

Nella lettera dedicatoria al fratello Giovanmatteo in apertura del IV libro del *De Rerum Inventoribus*, Polidoro, in perfetta sintonia con il pensiero dell'umanista olandese, affermava a tale proposito: 'Cristo restrinse tutto quello che Scribi e Farisei avevano allargato e tutto quello che essi avevano introdotto, che avesse in sé più di cerimonie che di vera pietà'. L'analisi della vita della Chiesa, lungo il suo percorso storico, doveva fondarsi sulla netta distinzione tra il *Divinum institutum* e l'*Ecclesiasticum institutum*: 'Affinchè — ribadiva l'urbinate — chiarissimamente apparisse quali cose fossero state introdotte dal Salvator nostro, quali dagli apostoli, quali dai vescovi e quali da altre persone'.<sup>21</sup> Le stesse critiche riguardavano altre tematiche fondamentali come il sacerdozio, il matrimonio dei preti, il primato del papa, il culto dei santi, la vita religiosa, la messa come sacrificio, il purgatorio, le indulgenze, il *modus orandi*, il rapporto tra fede ed opere. Insomma, era in gioco una generale riforma della Chiesa per l'edificazione di una

<sup>19</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1522. 45–46.

<sup>20</sup> Allen I, Ep. 181. 46–50: 'Enchiridion non ad ostentationem ingenii aut eloquentiae conscripsi, verum ad hoc solum, ut mederer errori vulgo religionem constituentium in ceremoniis et observationibus pene plusquam Iudaicis rerum corporalium, earum quae ad pietatem pertinent mire negligentium'.

<sup>21</sup> Virgili, *De gli inventori delle cose*, trad. Baldelli, lettera dedicatoria a Giovanmatteo Virgili, pp. 177–78.



profonda, sentita e interiore religiosità. L'impegno critico si estendeva anche ad aspetti riguardanti il ruolo della politica, la concezione dell'autorità e dello stato, volta alla promozione del bene comune; solo una società riconciliata poteva garantire la concordia e la pace universale, che erano la grande aspirazione e il grande sogno di Erasmo (sta per nascere un'età dell'oro). Grande spazio era dedicato al problema della pace; appelli accorati, soprattutto nei momenti in cui essa sembrava seriamente minacciata venivano rivolti dall'umanista olandese a partire dall'adagio 'Dulce bellum inexpertis' fino al trattato 'Querela pacis'. Nel grande progetto politico erasmiano, destinato a garantire la pace universale, una attenzione particolare la dedicava alla figura e al ruolo del principe, di cui egli tracciava un ritratto idealizzato e, in parte astratto, data la sua scarsa conoscenza della realtà, piuttosto contraddittoria e complessa, della vita politica. Anche il Virgili dedicava all'argomento riflessioni monitorie che ritroviamo negli *adagia*, come ad esempio nel proverbio 'Vae terrae cuius rex puer est' (CCLXXX).<sup>22</sup> La glossa di Polidoro al proverbio è una sorta di invettiva; infatti la peggior iattura era rappresentata dall'elezione di un re fanciullo che fosse in balia di principi avidi e di giudici corrotti. Una simile figura di sovrano e per la sua giovane età e per la sua scarsa perizia di governo (*infirmia sapientia*), costituiva un potenziale strumento di disgregazione sociale e di grave instabilità politica. Al *rex puer* e, in sostanza, in alternativa al monarca incapace o indegno, Polidoro contrapponeva un modello esemplare di sovrano: 'Debet bonus princeps potius diligere velle, quam timeri'.

Nella lettera a Polidoro del 24 marzo 1527, l'umanista olandese, assediato da ogni lato da nemici e detrattori, chiedeva all'amico di rafforzare con vincoli strettissimi l'amicizia che quelli avrebbero voluto rompere. La dedica a Polidoro delle versioni delle omelie di San Giovanni Crisostomo da parte di Erasmo, rappresenta il suggello della loro profonda e condivisa amicizia: 'Perché si consumino ancor di più quelli che sono afflitti dalla nostra concordia'. Erasmo ringraziava l'amico per la solerte opera di paciere tra lui e Lee. Era, in sostanza, la risposta di Polidoro a una identica cortesia fattagli, nel 1525 da Erasmo, che aveva mediato tra lui e Moro, dopo una non chiarita incomprensione, ristabilendo la concordia tra i due: 'Morus totus ex sua humanitate, tua etiam causa, meus est'.<sup>23</sup> In questo quadro si inserisce l'invito di Erasmo a Polidoro di tradurre a sua volta in latino un breve trattato di S. Crisostomo, la cui attribuzione risulterà poi falsa, dal titolo 'Il perfetto monaco e il cattivo principe'. La motivazione della proposta di

<sup>22</sup> Virgili, *Adagiorum aequae humanorum ut sacrorum opus*, p. 281.

<sup>23</sup> Allen VI, Ep. 1666 26–27.



Erasmus era anzitutto psicologica: non sentirsi solo di fronte al difficile compito di promuovere e difendere le *bonae litterae* dai comuni nemici:

Per il raggiungimento di questo obiettivo mi sembra che tu possa dare un contributo di grande importanza, sia per la tua singolare cultura, sia per l'autorità che godi su tutti, che ti deriva e dalla dignità della tua condizione e dalla integrità di vita.<sup>24</sup>

La seconda motivazione era di natura squisitamente scientifica: 'So che per i tuoi studi di un tempo tu unisci la conoscenza della letteratura greca alla conoscenza della S. Scrittura.'<sup>25</sup>

Lo scopo del lavoro era quello di proporre ai monaci ignoranti e corrotti, come modello da imitare, quello del vero monaco incarnato nelle grandi figure degli antichi Padri, esemplari per dottrina, costumi e santità di vita; la descrizione del cattivo principe rimandava per contrasto il lettore alle grandi figure di principi di nobile nascita ed educati fin da piccoli all'onestà, alla giustizia e alla beneficenza. L'intensa trattatistica politica di Erasmo era in realtà rivelatrice della precarietà e dei limiti del grande sogno della *Respublica Christiana*. Nella lettera a Polidoro del 5 settembre 1525, Erasmo partecipava all'amico la situazione drammatica in cui si trovava la città di Basilea, tra dispute religiose e gravi disordini sociali:

Qui si consuma una crudele e cruenta tragedia: i contadini vanno alla morte; ogni giorno scoppiano conflitti crudeli tra nobili e contadini talmente vicino, che si sente il rumore delle armi e delle macchine da guerra e il gemito di coloro che cadono in vicinanza.

Non si trattava di episodi isolati; l'umanista olandese era ormai consapevole di un ineluttabile declino: 'E' un male fatale che si diffonde con straordinaria velocità per ogni regione della terra'. I rimedi erano peggiori del male: 'I principi fanno ricorso a rimedi ordinari; temo che piuttosto possano aggravare il male.'<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Allen VI, Ep. 1734. 23–28: 'Quod unum igitur superest, alios ad bonarum literarum defensionem adhortor: quam quidem ad rem tu plurimum momenti mihi videris allaturus, vel ob eruditionem istam singularem, vel ob auctoritatem quam tibi quum fortunae dignitas, tum vitae integritas apud omnes conciliavit.'

<sup>25</sup> Allen VI, Ep. 1734. 6–8: 'Id eo feci lubentius quod intelligam te pristinis studiis tuis et Graecanicam literaturam et sacrorum voluminum cognitionem admiscere.'

<sup>26</sup> Allen VI, Ep. 1606. 17–20, 21, 25–6: 'Hic agitur crudelis et cruenta fabula. Agricolae ruunt in mortem. Quotidie fiunt conflictus atroces inter proceres et rusticos, adeo in propinquo ut tormentorum et armorum crepitus ac prope cadentium gemitus exaudiamus [...] Fatale malum est, mira celeritate pervagans omnes mundi plagas [...] Principes tantum agunt vulgaribus remediis. Metuo ne magis exasperent malum.'

Tutto il carteggio tra i due umanisti è costellato di continui richiami al ruolo decisivo delle *bonae litterae*, in ordine alla riforma degli studi e alla fondazione di una teologia biblica. Erasmo era il rappresentante principe di un umanesimo che mirava a una rigorosa purificazione della fede e delle sue forme. Egli riconosceva alle *litterae* un ruolo di mediazione tra la cultura classica e la cultura cristiana: Erasmo era il rappresentante perfetto di questo spirito ‘autorem cum renascentium litterarum, tum redeuntis pietatis’ lo definiva Capitone.<sup>27</sup> Da un paese all’altro, da una città all’altra, da Regno a Regno, da principe a principe, senza mai sposare la causa di alcuno, neppure quella di Lutero al quale pure aveva contribuito ad aprire la strada, e del quale tuttavia aveva sempre aborrito la critica troppo spesso impietosa ed irriverente, oltre all’impeto dirompente e turbolento, Erasmo fu alla fine spettatore rassegnato e impotente del tramonto inesorabile del suo sogno, così tenacemente coltivato, di una *Respublica Christiana*, pacificata e concorde. Né si può ignorare l’ambiguità e il distacco manifestati da Erasmo e Polidoro, a proposito della vicenda tragica dei due amici inglesi Fisher e Moro, giustiziati per non aver voluto riconoscere il re Enrico VIII come capo della Chiesa. Nelle rispettive lettere di quei giorni, non c’è traccia di segni di abbattimento e di indignazione; il che non sembra solo dovuto a un eccesso di prudenza, ma anche a una inspiegabile indifferenza di fronte al loro dramma interiore. Scriveva Erasmo in una lettera a tale proposito: ‘O se Moro non si fosse immischiato in quel pericoloso affare e avesse lasciato le questioni teologiche ai teologi’.<sup>28</sup> In realtà Moro era morto per tener fede alla sua coscienza! Quanto al Virgili, pur non avendo tradito la sua Chiesa di Roma, aveva saputo trovare un *modus vivendi* per conciliare, a un tempo, la sua fede, il riconoscimento delle prerogative reali (sottoscriverà gli articoli del 1536) e i suoi interessi. Nella sua ultima lettera ad Erasmo del 1532, riferendosi a Moro, l’urbinate si limitava a una informativa alquanto asettica e formale: ‘Il nostro signor Moro poco fa ha abdicato da quella grande carica che aveva (Il cancellierato), per riposarsi e per trascorrere serenamente la propria vecchiaia.’<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1368. 29.

<sup>28</sup> Allen xi, Ep. 3048. 59–60: ‘Vtinam periculoso negocio se nunquam admiscuisset, et causam theologicam cessisset theologis’.

<sup>29</sup> Allen x, Ep. 2662. 8–10: ‘Noster D. Morus nuper se abdicavit illo magno Magistratu, quem gerebat, ut sic se allevaret, et senectam aetatem quietius ageret’.

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## ERASMUS AND PLAGIARISM\*

Ari Wesseling<sup>†</sup>

Since when has plagiarism been a disgrace? In the Middle Ages borrowing without acknowledging the source was not considered a problem, and during the Renaissance it was also common practice. Humanists felt free to use the works of their predecessors and contemporaries, and considered the literature of the ancients as a reservoir to be tapped as they saw fit. Creative imitation and the desire to improve on a model (*imitatio* and *aemulatio*) were part and parcel of Renaissance literature, sanctioned by Horace's instructions in the *Ars poetica*.<sup>1</sup> The requirement of originality did not come up until the nineteenth century, when artists began to focus on personal, individual emotions and experiences. Yet authorship and authenticity were sensitive issues and of topical interest for most humanists. Some scholars accused others of theft. To use the term plagiarism in this connection might seem inappropriate and anachronistic, but it is not. Lorenzo Valla (1406–57) labelled a case of borrowing as theft and exposed the offender as a plagiarist. Erasmus accused a German scholar of theft while being demonstrably guilty of plagiarism himself. Both humanists held that literary theft was morally reprehensible and a reason for strong protest. Apparently they could expect approval from their readers, which indicates that already in the Renaissance plagiarism was a sensitive issue and considered an offence. It is true, however, that there was no clear-cut boundary between borrowing and plagiarism. Before going into this matter, I shall discuss three instances of the normal practice, that is, trouble-free borrowing material without mentioning the source.

\* This is an enlarged version of a contribution which appeared in Steenbakkers and Vanderjagt, eds, *Limae labor et mora*, pp. 66–70.

<sup>1</sup> See Auty and others, eds, *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, VII: *Planudes bis Stadt (Rus')* (1995), s.v. Poetik; Reiff, *Interpretatio, imitatio, aemulatio*; Jansen, *Imitatio: Literaire navolging*.

## Copying Freely

Erasmus's works were exploited from an early stage. The very first borrowing was from the *Adagiorum collectanea*, his first publication, which appeared at Paris in 1500. Petrus Montanus extracted a passage for the benefit of his own collection of proverbs, also called *Adagia* (1504). The proverb he borrowed (no. 723 in the *Collectanea*) runs 'Prospectandum vetulo cane latrante'. He also copied Erasmus's explanatory note. Erasmus himself remarks that it is not a classical adage but a proverb from the vernacular. The Dutch original is 'Als die oude hont bast so salmen uutsien', which means as much as 'When a greybeard raises the alarm, you'd better watch out'. For Montanus, an inhabitant of Guelders, the proverb must have had a special significance. He used it as a prelude to a spirited argument 'pro Germania' against the cultural hegemony of the Italians. In it he makes much of the achievements and natural talents of the Germanic peoples including the inhabitants of Guelders and Holland. It is a curious example of regional ambition and the idea of pan-Germanic identity. He predicts that one day Germania will equal both Greece and Rome and even surpass them in the field of eloquence. Montanus's eulogy was taken up by Gerard Geldenhouwer. This humanist from Nijmegen added it, with acknowledgment, to his history of the Batavians (*Historia Batavica*, f. 26 in the 1530 edition). He considered the Batavians, a Germanic tribe, as the ancestors of the Hollanders and the Gueldrians, on the strength of information found in Caesar and other historiographers. Thanks to Geldenhouwer this curious fragment from Montanus's *Adagia* has remained; the rest is lost.<sup>2</sup>

A second humanist who incorporated material from Erasmus's works at an early stage was Hadrianus Barlandus. Born in Zeeland, he was employed in Louvain all his life, mainly as a professor of Latin. He wrote an epitome of the *Adagia* for the benefit of students (1521). Erasmus welcomed this initiative and informed Barlandus, in words derived from Cicero's *De Officiis*, that he had done his native country, indeed all humankind, a great favour.<sup>3</sup> An interesting example of borrowing from Erasmus is found in Barlandus's description of the Netherlands, *Opusculum de insignibus oppidis Germaniae Inferioris* (Remarkable Cities in the Low Countries). It is actually a pamphlet favouring Charles V's expansionist policy. Barlandus gives a brief description of the provinces and towns that were sub-

<sup>2</sup> See Erasmus, *Adagia*, in *ASD* II-8, pp. 43–45.

<sup>3</sup> Allen IV, Ep. 1204. The sentence 'patria, quae, ut recte scripsit Plato, iure sibi nostri partem vindicat' (6–7) was derived from Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1. 22.

ject to Charles V in 1524. He also includes Guelders ('Gelria'), which, although the emperor laid claim to it, was not in fact at that time part of his possessions: it was under the command of his greatest troublemaker and opponent, Duke Charles of Egmont. Here and there Barlandus gives an impression of the inhabitants. He characterizes the Brabantines as friendly and cheerful:

No nation is as friendly and good-natured as the Brabantines, no people so unsusceptible to the burden of old age. It is because of their never-ending cheerfulness. This explains, it appears, the well-known saying 'the older the Brabantine, the more fool he is'.<sup>4</sup>

He undoubtedly took this passage from Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* and Listrius's commentary. Barlandus's description of the province of Holland is a collage of passages, partly singled out from Erasmus's eulogy on that province in the *Adagia* (no. 3535, entitled *Auris Batava*) and partly from a travel report by Crisostomo Colonna (Chrysostomus Neapolitanus), an elderly Italian from Salerno, who made a tour of Holland in 1514.<sup>5</sup>

Numerous examples can be given of this innocent practice of borrowing without acknowledging the source. No author went so far as the Aristotelian philosopher Agostino Nifo, a professor in Salerno and contemporary of Erasmus and Machiavelli. He made a translation into Latin of *Il Principe*, which he passed off as his own work, with the title *De regnandi peritia* (The Art of Governing) and a dedication to Charles V. The 'new' publication appeared in Naples, 1523.<sup>6</sup> And no one, it seems, took offence.

### *Accusations of Plagiarism*

Barlandus was free to copy; it was common practice among the humanists. Yet plagiarism was a sensitive issue. Some scholars called it an offence. In the preface to Book II of the *Elegantiae*, Lorenzo Valla accuses a fellow philologist of having

<sup>4</sup> 'Nulla est natio cui vel humanitate vel bonitate cesserint Brabanti, nulla gens quae minus gravem senectutem sentiat. Hoc illis perpetua praestat hilaritas. Unde videtur manasse iocus ille "Brabantus quo natu grandior, hoc stultior".'

<sup>5</sup> See Wesseling, 'In Praise of Brabant, Holland, and the Habsburg Expansion'.

<sup>6</sup> See Canfora, 'Il *De rege et tyranno* di Agostino Nifo'; Firpo, *Scritti sul pensiero politico del Rinascimento*, pp. 36–40. On Nifo as a philosopher see Schmitt and Skinner, eds, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy, ad indicem*; Hankins, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy, ad indicem*.

stolen a few observations on Latin grammar from him.<sup>7</sup> He speaks of ‘furtum’ and would like to take the thief to court under the law of kidnapping: ‘teque plagiaria lege convenire possum’. He did not mean this ‘taking to court’ in the literal sense. In those days intellectual property was not legally protected; there was no such thing as copyright. With the law against kidnapping (‘lex plagiaria’) he was referring to the ancient Roman Lex Fabia against abductors of people (‘de plagiariis’), which prohibited the kidnapping and trading of free men; this law is found in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (dig. 48. 15). Valla’s choice of words is worthy of note: he applies *plagiarius*, abductor of people, to the stealing of books (or passages thereof). He took this metaphorical application from the epigrammatist Martial, who is in fact the only classical author to use the word of the stealing of intellectual property (*Epigrammata*, 1. 52. 9). The origin of our terms plagiarist and plagiarism lies in Martial’s epigram (thief and theft of intellectual property respectively).<sup>8</sup>

Commendo tibi, Quintiane, nostros  
 — nostros dicere si tamen libellos  
 possum, quos recitat tuus poeta —:  
 si de servitio gravi queruntur,  
 adsertor venias satisque praestes,  
 et, cum se dominum vocabit ille,  
 dicas esse meos manumque missos.  
 Hoc si terque quaterque clamitaris,  
 impones plagario pudorem.

(I entrust my books to you, Quintianus — if, that is, I can call those books mine, which your poet recites. If they complain about their harsh servitude, I ask you to appear as their champion and provide guarantees, and, when he calls himself their master, to say that they are mine and have been given their freedom. If you shout this out three or four times, you will make the plagiarist feel shame. [trans. P. Howell])

The name of the plagiarist is suppressed, but he may well be the same as the poet Fidentinus who is the target of the next poem (1. 53), with which 1. 52 seems

<sup>7</sup> The accused is Antonio da Rho; see Valla, *Laurentii Valle Epistole*, ed. by Besomi, pp. 218–19.

<sup>8</sup> Ambrosius Calepinus’s widely used *Dictionarium* (Reggio, 1502) must have played a crucial role in the transmission of Martial’s usage. Calepinus refers to it s.v. Plagiarius: ‘Plagiarium vocat [scil. Martialis] furem librorum suorum’. He copied this entry from Niccolò Perotti’s *Cornu copiae*; see Perotti, *Cornu copiae*, ed. by Charlet, II, 243–44.



to form a pair. He is called expressly a thief ('fur') in the final line and is also attacked in 1. 29, 1. 38, 1. 72 and, perhaps, in 1. 66, where Martial addresses a plagiarist as 'mean robber of my books' ('meorum fur avare librorum').

About a hundred years earlier the phenomenon of literary theft had also been condemned by Horace. He famously compares a plagiarist to a crow that adorns itself with stolen plumage.<sup>9</sup> Disapproval is also apparent from a remark by Seneca the Elder in defence of a poet who borrowed frequently from Vergil 'not in order to steal, but to borrow openly, so that the reader would recognize the original source'.<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of the Renaissance Petrarch expresses a similar view. He defends Vergil, who used the technique of *imitatio* 'not to steal from but to emulate his model'.<sup>11</sup>

Erasmus condemns plagiarism in no uncertain terms, both in his *Praise of Folly* and in the *Adagia*. Lady Folly herself calls plagiarists sneaky profiteers:

Even smarter are those writers who publish the work of others as their own, and by such verbal juggling shift to themselves the glory for which someone else has laboured long and hard. They do it with full assurance about what will happen: even if they should be exposed as plagiarists, still they will enjoy the credit of the achievement for a while anyway.<sup>12</sup>

In the preface to the enlarged edition of the *Adagia* published in 1533 Erasmus declares that it is correct and fair to acknowledge the sources. Otherwise, he says, one is showing off in borrowed plumes ('se plumis alienis venditare'). Like Valla he, too, uses the term 'furtum'. Which thief did he have in mind? He vaguely refers to authors who have borrowed material from his collection without acknowledgment in order to create the impression that they had thought it all up themselves.<sup>13</sup> He is presumably alluding to Ioannes Alexander Brassicanus (alias J. A.

<sup>9</sup> 'Furtivi colores'; Horace, *Ep.*, 1. 3. 15–20. On plagiarism in antiquity see Ziegler, 'Plagiat'; Grafton, 'Plagiat'; Grafton, 'Plagiarism'; and Claes, *Echo's echo's*, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> 'Non subripiendi causa, sed palam mutuandi, hoc animo ut vellet agnosci': Seneca, *Suasoriae*, 3. 7.

<sup>11</sup> 'Non furandi, sed certandi animo': Petrarch, *Rerum familiarium libri*, xxii. 2, quoted in Gmelin, 'Das Prinzip der Imitatio in den romanischen Literaturen', pp. 123–24).

<sup>12</sup> Trans. Clarence H. Miller, 'Sed magis etiam sapiunt qui aliena pro suis edunt et alieno magnoque partam labore gloriam verbis in se transmovent, hoc videlicet freti, quod arbitrentur futurum ut etiam si maxime coarguantur plagii, tamen aliquanti temporis usuram sint interim lucrifacturi'. *Moriae encomium, id est Stultitiae laus*, in *ASD* IV-3, p. 142, ll. 322–25.

<sup>13</sup> Their aim is to achieve 'ne quid ex meis Chiliadibus videantur sumpsisse mutuo, sed rem totam suis auspiciis suoque Marte confecisse'. *ASD* II-1, p. 42, ll. 495–512. The preface is also found in Allen x, Ep. 2773.

Köl, 1500–39). Initially Brassicanus was on friendly terms with Erasmus. The latter showed his appreciation for the young philologist and lawyer by assigning him an honourable part in one of his *Colloquies*, entitled *Apotheosis Capnionis* (1522) and devoted to his famous fellow-countryman Johann Reuchlin. Unintentionally Brassicanus ruined the good relations with Erasmus by one of his own publications, a small proverb collection (*Proverbiorum symmicta*), which appeared in Vienna in 1529. It contains one hundred and twenty-eight adages complete with a thorough commentary and a bonus of eighteen Pythagorean rules. In the preface he presents it as a modest supplement to the *Adagia* of the ‘princeps paroemiographus’ and sends a copy as a tribute to the revered master. Surprisingly, Erasmus appears far from pleased with the supplement. In his reply (Allen VIII, Ep. 2305, April 1530) he reproaches Brassicanus for having taken a number of passages from the *Adagia*. And that is not all. He plunders the recent publication and incorporates the material into the steadily expanding supplement that he has been preparing since 1528 with a view to a new edition of the *Adagia*. (Comparison shows that at least twenty-eight items have either been taken from or inspired by Brassicanus. The items are scattered throughout the massive supplement.) The new edition appeared in Basel in March 1533. Brassicanus’s name is not mentioned anywhere. Erasmus even goes a step further. Now that his new edition is available and circulating, he point-blank accuses Brassicanus of plagiarism: the latter had incorporated about thirty proverbs from the *Adagia* into his own collection.

This false accusation must have frustrated Brassicanus quite a bit. Letters of protest to Erasmus had no effect: the master appeared indifferent. On 14 May 1533 he wrote the following to his confidant Viglius Zuichemus (Viglius Aytta):

For some reason Brassicanus is angry with me or else he is burning with shame. He bragged that after Erasmus there were still proverbs left for collection, although he took about thirty proverbs from my *Adagia*. He has broken off the correspondence with me, but I don’t really care. After all, his letters are brimming with anger.<sup>14</sup>

Incidentally, Erasmus writes that Brassicanus is burning with shame, ‘pudore obrutus est’. This expression recalls the final line of Martial’s epigram (1. 52. 9): ‘impones plagiaro pudorem’ (‘You, my patron, will put the plagiarist to shame’).

<sup>14</sup> ‘Brassicanus aut concepit certas iras, aut pudore obrutus est. Iactarat non deesse quod colligeretur post Erasmum, quum triginta fere proverbia sumpserit ex meis. Desiit ad me scribere, quod facile fero. Nihil enim illius epistolis stomachantius’. Allen x, Ep. 2810. 49–54. For this affair see also *ASD* II-8, pp. 13–14.

Was Erasmus alluding to this epigram? In any case, as appears from the *Adagia*, he was very familiar with the Roman poet.

Erasmus's main grievance seems to be that someone had dared write a supplement to his work. This is odd, because in the prefaces to the enlarged editions he insists that the collecting of adages is a work without end. After all, he says, new classical authors appear in print for the first time continuously.<sup>15</sup> It was obviously his desire to keep the collection under his own control. It was hard for him to accept that another person had been ahead of him, namely Polidoro Virgili from Urbino, better known as Polydore Vergil, the first humanist historiographer of England, who had published a book of proverbs (*Proverbiorum libellus*) in 1498, two years before Erasmus's own collection appeared. As late as 1533 Erasmus is still bending over backwards to claim the honour for himself; in doing so he takes care to avoid mentioning his rival by name.<sup>16</sup> In 1519 Polydore writes that he could hardly believe that Erasmus, a distinguished and celebrated scholar, would begrudge him the small honour of such a modest first.<sup>17</sup> Moreover it is highly probable that Erasmus occasionally took material from Polydore's collection for his own *Adagia*, without ever mentioning the latter's name.<sup>18</sup>

Erasmus's conduct towards Brassicanus shows a dark side of his personality (in this case rather petty and hypocritical). His false accusation is also revealing of his attitude towards plagiarism: in principle, he condemns borrowing of material without acknowledgment as theft. It is surprising that the challenged offence should relate to classical proverbs — common heritage one would think, although Erasmus's concern is of course also his own philological explanations.

A remark made by Erasmus in the same period at the expense of Guillaume Budé is similarly instructive. It concerns an at first sight insignificant example in the *Adagia*, meant to illustrate in which particular situation a certain expression can be used; the expression is the ancient legal term *herciscere* (to apportion an inheritance): 'When Guillaume Budé and Leonardo de Portis were in dispute

<sup>15</sup> *ASD* II-1, p. 33, ll. 268–71; pp. 36–38; p. 39, l. 420. He uses this argument to apologize to owners of a copy of the *Adagia* for the publication of an enlarged edition, which, after all, diminishes the value of a previous edition.

<sup>16</sup> See the above quoted preface, *ASD* II-1, p. 42, ll. 475–85. On Polidoro Virgili see *CEBR*, III, 397–99; Ruggeri, *Un amico di Erasmo*.

<sup>17</sup> 'Etenim pene incredibile est Erasmum tot titulis redundantem velle cuiquam tam modicae inventionis gloriolam invidere.' Quoted from Polidoro's dedicatory letter to an enlarged edition of his collection with altered title (Virgili, *Adagiorum liber*); the letter (addressed to Richard Pace) is dated 1519.

<sup>18</sup> See *ASD* II-4, p. 335, note to l. 174; *ASD* II-7, p. 197, note to l. 259.

over which of them first discovered the old Roman pound (the *as*), Janus Lascaris was appointed arbiter in the “apportioning” of the glory.<sup>19</sup> What is Erasmus referring to? Budé’s masterpiece *De Asse* (The Roman Coinage, 1515) discusses the Roman systems both of money and of weights and measures. It appeared between 1515 and 1532 in several editions. Leonardo de Portis, a rather obscure humanist from Vicenza, wrote a treatise on the same subject (*De sestertio, pecuniis, ponderibus et mensuris antiquis*). His work probably appeared in Venice in 1520 for the first time; reprints followed, including one by Jerome Froben and others at Basel in 1530. The question arose as to who had the honour of being first. Erasmus interfered in the matter in 1527. In a letter to Budé he remarks that the Italian’s treatise is so similar to that by Budé that nobody doubts that one of them had pillaged the work of the other: ‘ut nemo dubitet quin alteruter alterum compilarit’ (Allen VII, Ep. 1840. 7–10). Erasmus’s remark is not devoid of malice: he subtly fails to give Budé pride of place and obliquely accuses him of plagiarism. Relations were already strained between Erasmus and Budé, his equal and rival in the republic of letters. The rift between the two reached breaking-point in the following year, after Erasmus’s condescending treatment of Budé’s style in the *Ciceronianus* (1528). During the succeeding months epigrams began to circulate at the expense of Erasmus, who suspected that Budé’s friend Janus Lascaris was largely responsible.<sup>20</sup> Against this background it will become clear that the innocent example in the *Adagia* (included in the 1533 edition) bears a particular significance. It is another teasing blow, aimed at Budé. It further appears that borrowing from contemporary authors without acknowledgment was regarded as theft in Erasmus’s days. Mere suspicion could be a ground for damaging a person’s reputation.

Accusations of plagiarism are found in many a defamatory pamphlet. Erasmus’s attack on Cicero in his *Ciceronianus* incurred the wrath of J. C. Scaliger. He charged Erasmus among other things with theft in his second pamphlet (printed in 1537, a year after Erasmus’s death); he calls him a perfidious plagiarist who had taken his chances wherever he could during his stay in Italy (‘perfidiosum

<sup>19</sup> ‘Veluti si quis dicat inter Guilhelmum Budaeum et Leonardum Portium de assis inventione concertantes Ianum Lascarem datum herciscundae gloriae arbitrum.’ *Adagia*, 4116, *ASD* II-8, pp. 323–24. For Erasmus’s wording compare Cicero, *Pro Caecina*, 7. 19 ‘nomine heredis arbitrum familiae herciscundae postulavit’; and *De Legibus*, I. 20. 53 ‘vellem me arbitrum inter Academiam et Zenonem datum’.

<sup>20</sup> Allen VII, Epp. 2038. 19–21; 2040, 15–24; Allen VIII, Ep. 2105. 10–12. On the strained relations between Erasmus and Budé see Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, I, pp. 41–43 and Chomarat, *Mots et croyances*, pp. 87–95.

plagiarium [...] tota Italia volitantem'). More specifically, he accuses Erasmus of having pillaged a dialogue of Niccolò Leonico Tomeo for the benefit of his own colloquy about playing knucklebones, a gambling game from antiquity. It is true that Erasmus possessed a copy of Leonico's *Dialogi*, but comparison shows he did not copy the latter's writing. He undoubtedly used the same source, to wit, Aristotle's treatise on zoology.<sup>21</sup> Yet it seems likely that he owed the idea for his colloquy to Leonico.

So authorship and authenticity were sensitive issues which were taken very seriously. This also applied to works from antiquity. The historico-philological method which was developed by the humanists no doubt raised their awareness. Valla demonstrated that the *Donatio Constantini*, a cardinal document in favour of the papal claim to secular power, was a forgery. Erasmus negated the authenticity of the famous correspondence between Seneca and the apostle Paul.<sup>22</sup>

Speaking of forgeries (actually the very opposite of plagiarism): Erasmus's conduct in the case of the notorious treatise *De duplici martyrio* (On Twofold Martyrdom) is bizarre and baffling. It is part of the works of St Cyprian, that is, in the edition prepared by Erasmus (more precisely: in the fourth issue thereof, 1530). It is almost certain that Erasmus himself is the author. He had it inserted and passed off as one of Cyprian's writings.<sup>23</sup> In the treatise Erasmus vindicates the worth of *spiritual* martyrdom as opposed to physical suffering. (He had anything but the makings of a martyr. Besides, the heroic age of persecution had come to an end with Constantine in 312.) Perhaps he intended to enhance the prestige and authority of his work by employing the name of a saintly man who had died from persecution and torture. In a very different context he condemns the use of the name of an author without his consent as an offence ('iniuria').<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Historia animalium*, 2. 1, 499b. See Scaliger, *Orationes duae contra Erasmum*, ed. by Magnien, p. 324, ll. 2556–62, and the note on pp. 362–63. Erasmus's colloquy, entitled *Astragalismos sive Talorum lus*, in *Colloquia*, ASD 1-3, pp. 620–28.

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. Kraye, 'Erasmus and the Canonization of Aristotle', pp. 45–46. A seventeenth-century scholar was so vehemently opposed to plagiarism that he compiled a blacklist of 88 cases (15th–17th century), later extended to 250 cases; Janssonius, *Plagiariorum syllabus* (1686); Janssonius, *Plagiariorum syllabus* (1694). See Stegeman, 'Patronage en dienstverlening', p. 34. Before him, Jac. Thomasius (and Johann Michael Reinell) investigated plagiarism and opinions about it from antiquity until his own time, Thomasius and Reinell, *Dissertatio philosophica de plagio literario*. See Janssonius, *Plagiariorum syllabus*, pp. 442–44.

<sup>23</sup> Grafton, *Forgers and Critics*, pp. 40–41; Adkin, 'Erasmus' *Paraphrases in Novum Testamentum*'; Den Boeft, 'Erasmus and the Church Fathers', pp. 562–63; Hallyn, 'Le fictif, le vrai et le faux'.

<sup>24</sup> See the preface to the 1519 edition of the *Colloquia*, ASD 1-3, p. 116, ll. 46–47, 'Scio non

And yet he declared in 1519 that the aim of his editorial project was to produce an expurgated edition and to distinguish Cyprian's authentic works from writings which were wrongly ascribed to him.<sup>25</sup> Erasmus blandly refers to his pseudo-Cyprianic work in his tract on war against the Turks, claiming that Cyprian mentions these barbarians in his *De duplici martyrio*.<sup>26</sup> So Erasmus cites a forgery by his own hand to support his argument.

Erasmus did not flinch from committing plagiarism and forgery, although it was limited to just one or two cases. He must have been convinced that he would never be found out. Would he now turn in his grave?

esse levem iniuriam aedere meo nomine quod meum non est' (with reference to an unauthorized edition of his work). On forged letters see Bénévent, 'Peut-on parler de *faux* et *usage de faux* au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle?.'

<sup>25</sup> 'Mihi certe gestit animus hunc autorem orbi tradere repurgatum a mendis, deinde discretum ab iis quae illi falso inscribuntur'. Allen III, Ep. 975. 3–5.

<sup>26</sup> *Consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo* (1530), ASD v-3, p. 39.

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## INDUS ELEPHANTUS HAUD CURAT CULICEM: ÉRASME ET DOLET (1528–38)

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**D**idier Érasme de Rotterdam exerça sur ses contemporains un ascendant remarquable. Auteur polygraphe comme il se définit lui-même,<sup>1</sup> il marqua son époque et la postérité par la subtilité et la modernité de ses conceptions pédagogiques, notamment dans le *De pueris instituendis*,<sup>2</sup> mais aussi dans le domaine de la morale, grâce à ses chiliades d'*Adages* sans cesse enrichies, polies et repolies;<sup>3</sup> dans celui de la rhétorique, car son *De copia verborum ac rerum* fut abondamment réédité<sup>4</sup> et devint un manuel de référence dans de nombreuses écoles du Nord de l'Europe;<sup>5</sup> dans le domaine théologique même, au point que toute son œuvre fut mise à l'index par le concile de Trente. Il fut aussi le chef charismatique de la République européenne des Lettres, fréquentant Thomas More, Philippe Mélanchthon, Guillaume Budé, ou correspondant avec eux. Certains humanistes jeunes et moins jeunes, tels que Cursius à Rome, Luther en Allemagne, Scaliger en France, tentèrent cependant d'échapper à cette influence car ils supportaient mal sa prééminence.

Étienne Dolet, érudit français, prosateur mais aussi poète, surtout connu pour son trépas tragique sur le bûcher en 1546, fait partie de ce groupe d'humanistes avides de se démarquer de la lignée érasmiennne pour mieux se faire reconnaî-

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Ciceronianus*, in *ASD* 1-2, p. 681, l. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus, *De pueris instituendis*, *ASD* 1-2, pp. 23–78.

<sup>3</sup> Phillips, *The 'Adages' of Erasmus*.

<sup>4</sup> On compte 134 éditions entre la *princeps* de 1512 chez J. Bade et l'année 1540. Cf. Erasmus, *De Copia*, *ASD* 1-6, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Moss, *Les Recueils de lieux communs*, p. 149.

tre. Les relations conflictuelles entre Érasme et Dolet ont déjà été étudiées par Jacques Chomarat et Kenneth Lloyd-Jones.<sup>6</sup> Je voudrais cependant montrer dans cette communication que derrière cette hostilité affichée, voire cultivée, Dolet a beaucoup emprunté à la pensée et au style du Hollandais dans ses ouvrages les plus méconnus, sa poésie néo-latine, et plus particulièrement dans les *Carmina* de 1538 et le *Genethliacum* de 1539.

## *I. Les rapports entre Érasme et Dolet de 1528 à 1536*

### **1. L'origine de la querelle: le traité théorique d'Érasme et les réponses de Dolet**

La querelle du cicéronianisme s'enflamma une dernière fois en Europe dans les années 1530; pour être un avatar des polémiques entre Politien et Cortesi d'une part, Jean-François Pic de la Mirandole et P. Bembo de l'autre, elle n'en revêtit pas moins un caractère très passionné.

Dans le *Ciceronianus* paru chez Froben en 1528, Érasme caricaturait les adeptes du style cicéronien en malades obsédés du style de l'Arpinate, refusant d'user d'un vocable qui ne fût repérable chez le grand orateur et occupés à collationner de petites fiches pour composer un grand dictionnaire de la langue cicéronienne. Dolet réagit violemment et commença à cette date à composer un pamphlet qui ne parut qu'en 1535 sous le titre provocateur de *Dialogus de imitatione ciceroniana adversus Desiderium Erasum*.<sup>7</sup> Pour expliquer cette violence, on peut supposer que Dolet avait reconnu Longueil dans le portrait-charge de Nosopon ou s'était peut-être même senti visé. On se rappelle en effet que Nosopon était victime de certaines manies et ne pouvait composer ses épîtres cicéroniennes que dans le calme de la nuit:

Primum illud est: nunquam ad scribendum accingor, nisi nocte intempesta, quum profunda quies et altum silentium tenet omnia.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Chomarat, 'Dolet et Érasme'; Lloyd-Jones, 'Erasmus and Dolet on the Ethics of Imitation'; Lloyd-Jones, 'Une étoffe bigarrée'.

<sup>7</sup> Dans la suite de l'article, je désigne ce dialogue comme Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle.

<sup>8</sup> Erasmus, *Ciceronianus*, in *ASD* 1-2, p. 612, ll. 12-13. Ma traduction. Cf. *Sap.* 18. 14, 'Cum enim quietum silentium contineret omnia'; *Missale romanum*, Introite, Dom. infra octavum Nativitatis Domini.

Premièrement, je ne m'attèle jamais à l'écriture, si ce n'est dans la profondeur de la nuit, quand un calme absolu et un grand silence tiennent toute chose.

Quand parut ce pamphlet, Dolet avait déjà commencé à composer ses *Commentarii linguae Latinae* et usait alors des mêmes méthodes de travail que la créature de papier érasmienne: même acharnement, comme il le raconte à l'article *conditio*:<sup>9</sup>

Non facile enim credas quam in conficiendis istiusmodi Commentariis invigilandum, incubandum, insudandum, atque dies noctesque aestuandum; quam cibo, somnoque abstinendum sit, quam omni laxamento, quam omni otio, quam omni oblectatione, quam omni amicorum congressu, quam omni honesta voluptate, quam vitae pene usura cendum fuit.

En effet, on ne croirait pas aisément combien, pour achever des *Commentaires* de ce genre, j'ai dû veiller, sans dormir, transpirer et brûler jour et nuit ; combien j'ai dû m'abstenir de nourriture et de sommeil, combien tout délassement, tout loisir, tout divertissement, toute réunion entre amis, tout plaisir honnête, et presque tout usage de la vie me furent interdits.

où la période et l'anaphore de *quam* soulignent la peine mise en œuvre pour écrire ce dictionnaire de la langue cicéronienne, où les détails 'invigilandum [...] dies noctesque [...] somnoque abstinendum' font écho à la formule 'nocte intempesta' employée par Nosopon. De même, lorsque Nosopon avoue rédiger de nombreuses digressions autour de chaque terme de son modèle:

Nulla est in omnibus divini viri libris vocula, quam non in Lexicon alphabeticum digesserim. [...] Verum est alterum volumen hoc etiam grandius, in quod iuxta litterarum ordinem annotavi formulas loquendi M. Tullio peculiares.<sup>10</sup>

Il n'y a, dans tous les livres de cet homme divin, pas un mot que je n'aie classé dans mon dictionnaire. [...] Et en vérité, j'ai un second volume encore plus imposant que celui-ci, dans lequel, à côté de l'ordre des lettres, j'ai noté des expressions propres à notre Cicéron.<sup>11</sup>

ces détails font justement penser aux *Commentaires de la Langue Latine* (1536–38) d'Étienne Dolet. Les *Commentaires* constituent en effet, comme le Dictionnaire de Nosopon, un répertoire des expressions cicéroniennes, en par-

<sup>9</sup> Dolet, *Commentarii linguae latinae*, II (1538), col. 954. Ma traduction.

<sup>10</sup> Erasmus, *Ciceronianus*, in *ASD* 1-2, p. 609, ll. 24–25 et 27–29.

<sup>11</sup> Ma traduction.

ticulier le tome I, paru en 1536; en observant l'article *gloria*, on remarque qu'après la définition générale, le philologue a cité quelques expressions cicéroniennes en les situant précisément dans l'oeuvre de l'orateur latin, comme pour que le lecteur les ait à portée de main et puisse les retrouver facilement.<sup>12</sup>

Il n'est donc pas étonnant que, dès le second discours de Toulouse (1534), qui valut à Dolet d'être exilé de cette cité et d'abandonner des études de droit à peine entamées, le jeune humaniste s'en prenne de façon virulente à son aîné. Il place d'emblée le débat sur un plan stylistique et esthétique:

Si tuo Batavique rhetoris iudicio inexhaustam Ciceronis copiam atque ubertatem, ita tenuem contractamque arbitrarer, ut latine loqui cupienti non omnia abunde suppeditare posse diffiderem, risu me iure proscinderes, ab iis non dissimilem, qui eo orationis genere utuntur, quae ex verborum undique accersitorum corrogatorumque congerie, et immenso historiarum, exemplorum, adagiorumque cumulo, velut cento undequaque consutus, constet.

Si, en suivant ton jugement [celui de Pinaque] ainsi que celui du rhéteur batave, je considérerais l'abondance et la richesse inépuisable de Cicéron comme étant si faible et si parcimonieuse que je devrais désespérer qu'elle puisse abondamment fournir le nécessaire à toute personne désireuse de parler latin, tu pourrais alors m'écraser de tes rires. Tu pourrais alors me trouver assez peu différent de ceux qui usent du genre d'éloquence où tout est composé d'un amas de mots tirés d'un peu partout et jetés ensemble, d'un immense morceau d'histoires, d'exemples et d'adages, comme une pièce d'étoffe bigarrée cousue de morceaux venus de n'importe où.<sup>13</sup>

Les expressions méprisantes foisonnent ici: Érasme est ramené au statut de simple 'rhéteur batave'; l'image de 'l'étoffe bigarrée', inspirée des *panni purpurei* d'Horace,<sup>14</sup> deviendra célèbre et dénonce l'imitation éclectique préconisée par le grand savant, imitation que Dolet s'amuse à assimiler de façon méprisante à la technique du centon; enfin, l'allusion aux adages rend l'attaque d'autant plus offensante qu'elle vise un des ouvrages alors les plus édités et les plus lus d'Érasme.

Hormis celle de Scaliger,<sup>15</sup> la violence polémique de Dolet eut peu d'équivalent, comme le prouve l'examen des insultes qu'il débite dans son dialogue *Erasmianus* en 1535. Il n'est pas nécessaire de les recenser dans le détail car

<sup>12</sup> Dolet, *Commentarii linguae latinae*, I (1536), col. 334 sqq.

<sup>13</sup> Dolet, *Orationes duae in Tholosam*, éd. par Lloyd-Jones, pp. 36 et 157.

<sup>14</sup> Horace, *Art Poétique*, 15–16.

<sup>15</sup> Scaliger, *Orationes duae contra Erasmum*, éd. par Magnien.

ce travail a été réalisé par J. Chomarat;<sup>16</sup> rappelons cependant que l'humaniste orléanais y mêle l'attaque *ad hominem* aux reproches stylistiques et éthiques. En effet, il se moque de la vieillesse et de la décrépitude d'Érasme, le nommant 'silicernio dentibus defecto' ('cadavre édenté'),<sup>17</sup> et 'senem repuerascentem' ('vieillard gâteux');<sup>18</sup> il le traite d'hypocrite: 'senem versipellem aut bilinguem nominabo, qui modo candidus sit, modo ater nimium, qui linguam alteram melle delibutam, alteram toxico distentam ac rigentem gerat' ('je l'appellerai vieux Protée ou double-langue, car il est tantôt blanc comme neige, tantôt très noir, il montre une langue tantôt adoucie de miel, tantôt gorgée et raidie de poison').<sup>19</sup> Dolet s'attaque ensuite à ses ouvrages: ses écrits sont 'abjecte, frigide, jejuneque scripta omnia, sordida omnia, impura omnia, male culta omnia' ('tous écrits platement, froidement, maigres, tous ignobles, tous impurs, tous peu soignés'),<sup>20</sup> dénonçant ainsi la tendance d'Érasme à écrire vite sans jamais se relire, ce que ce dernier avouait volontiers;<sup>21</sup> le terme *jejune* appartient du reste à la querelle du cicéronianisme et chaque camp taxe l'autre d'une maigreur stylistique, *jejunia*, qui serait liée au mode d'imitation choisi. Dolet s'en prend encore aux *Adages*, évoquant les 'surreptas Adagiorum chiliades' ('les Chiliades d'Adages dérobées'),<sup>22</sup> susurrant ainsi qu'Érasme emprunte à d'autres les proverbes qu'il a recensés, car ces recueils foisonnaient dès le xv<sup>e</sup> siècle en Europe;<sup>23</sup> il le taxe de lucianisme: 'Erasmus contra [...] quod Lucianum omnibus ridendis et pungendis impie aemuletur' ('mais Érasme [...] sous prétexte qu'il imite Lucien de façon impie en se moquant et en piquant chacun'),<sup>24</sup> ce qui revient à l'accuser d'athéisme; il le traite de bavard, 'quid illius garrulitatem imitatur?' ('pourquoi imiterions-nous son creux bavardage?'),<sup>25</sup> lui reprochant son exégèse des textes chrétiens, qui, aux

<sup>16</sup> Chomarat, 'Dolet et Érasme', p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle, p. 4. Ma traduction.

<sup>18</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle, p. 24. Ma traduction. Cf. Plautus, *Merc.*, 296; Cicero, *De Senectute*, 83; Jérôme, *In Ezechielem*, *Hom. 1*, col. 701C.

<sup>19</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle, p. 32. Ma traduction. Il reprend cette accusation à la page 158.

<sup>20</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle, p. 26. Ma traduction.

<sup>21</sup> Érasme avoue sa négligence dans le *Ciceronianus*, in *ASD* 1-2, p. 681, ll. 11–13 et dans sa correspondance, Allen III, Ep. 935. 32–40 (avril 1519).

<sup>22</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. by Telle, p. 19. Ma traduction.

<sup>23</sup> Pour plus de détails, je renvoie à l'article de Vignes, 'Pour une gnomologie'.

<sup>24</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle, p. 40. Dolet fait allusion à son *Éloge de la Folie* de 1512.

<sup>25</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle, p. 155.

yeux de Dolet, se suffisent à eux-mêmes et ne nécessitent pas de commentaire. En somme, l'attaque est vive et sans détour; elle réunit les mêmes reproches que le second Discours contre Toulouse; elle ne sera pas sans lendemain puisque le nom d'Érasme sera cité avec agressivité à plusieurs reprises dans les *Commentaires de la langue latine*, à l'article *eloquentia* du tome I (1536),<sup>26</sup> ou à l'article *acrimonia* du tome II (1538),<sup>27</sup> par exemple.

## 2. La présentation d'Érasme dans les *Carmina*

Quatre épigrammes des *Carmina* sont consacrées à Érasme et complètent la critique. Je les présenterai dans l'ordre chronologique puisque certaines datent de la première édition de ces poèmes, 1534, et les autres de l'édition de 1538.

L'épigramme II, 30 date de 1534; elle s'attaque à Érasme sans le nommer:

Quid profuit pullum cucullum ponere, Cum, quam cucullus tum docet, tum adfert suis,	À quoi sert que tu déposes ton capuchon brun Alors que (chose que le capucin enseign apporte [à ses collègues)
Mentem profanam, callidam et sensus vafri Plenam, scelestam omnique consutam dolo <sup>28</sup> Tam diligenter, quam antea, serves tibi? Te spes fefellit primum et illa opinio,	Tu gardes en toi avec autant de soin qu'avant Une âme sacrilège, retorse, pleine de finasserie, Criminelle, cousue de mille ruses? Tu as été le premier trompé dans ton espoir et [ton illusion:
Qua cum cucullo duplici mores tuos duplices Posse abiici prorsus putabas duplices. Ac nos simul multum fefellisti, quia	Tu pensais pouvoir rejeter tes habitudes Grâce à un capuchon duplice. En même temps tu nous as bien trompés, parce [qu'avec
Cum veste deiectam arbitrabamur luem Vestis; minusque cavimus tum a te, prius	L'habit nous pensions que tu avais abandonné [la souillure De l'habit et nous nous défiâmes moins alors [de toi
A quo cavebamus cucullato plano.	Que de l'encapuchonné dont avant nous [défiions, lorsqu'il l'était à la face de tous.

Malgré l'absence de nom, on reconnaît la cible dès le premier vers dans l'expression *cucullum ponere*; à la fin de l'*Erasmianus*, Dolet usait des mêmes reproches:

<sup>26</sup> Dolet, *Commentarii linguae latinae*, I (1536), col. 1234–35.

<sup>27</sup> Dolet, *Commentarii linguae latinae*, II (1538), col. 520.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. 'cento undequaque consutus', p. 216 *supra*.

‘contractum cucullo ingenium, abjecto cucullo non exuit. Ut duplex est fere cucullus, duplici quoque ille animo est’ (‘le naturel acquis avec le capuchon, il ne s’en est pas dépouillé après avoir quitté le capuchon. Comme le capuchon est double, pour ainsi dire, cet homme a un esprit double lui aussi’);<sup>29</sup> cette épigramme de 1534 anticipait donc sur le dialogue de 1535 et dénonçait l’hypocrisie de son adversaire.

Les trois autres épigrammes des *Carmina* évoquant Érasme datent, elles, de 1538. Dans la pièce II, 19, Dolet s’adresse à Jules-César Scaliger, un des autres adversaires d’Érasme :

Cogente fato debitas poenas luit	Sous la contrainte du destin, Érasme subit les peines
Erasmus, ut qui quoslibet	Méritées par qui
Vel immerentes garrula eloquentia	Maltraite même ceux qui ne le méritent pas de son [éloquence bavarde:
Vexavit; asper in bonos,	Il est rude contre les honnêtes gens,
Supplex remorsuro. Ac perennem credidit	Suppliant si l’on est prêt à le mordre en retour. [Et il a cru que sa renommée
Sibi patere nominis	S’accroîtrait, éternelle,
Accessionem, nemini si parceret	S’il n’épargnait personne
Et elevaret omnium	Et rabaissait les écrits illustres
Praeclara scripta digna vel Demosthene.	De tout le monde, même s’ils étaient dignes de [Démosthène.
Huc usque dixit libere,	Jusqu’ici il a parlé librement
Quodcumque mens tulit furore percita;	Et dit tout ce que son âme, excitée par sa fureur, a [conçu;
Quae nolit, aequum est audiat.	Ce qu’il ne veut pas, il est juste qu’il l’entende.

Dolet reprend, synthétise et complète en une pièce de douze vers iambiques ses reproches habituels: le bavardage creux du Batave, *garrula eloquentia*, qu’il met en valeur par la coupe centrale du trimètre; sa lâcheté, *supplex remorsuro*, reproche traditionnel des ennemis du Hollandais; son caractère lucianesque qui le pousse à égratigner tout un chacun, avec des expressions comme *asper*, *nemini parceret*; sa gloriole qui l’incite à imposer sa propre langue latine à la place de celle de Cicéron, *elevaret omnium praeclara scripta*; dès le début de la pièce, Dolet endosse le rôle du justicier qu’il renforce par l’expression qu’il emprunte au *Pro Milone* 104<sup>30</sup> pour mieux faire le procès d’Érasme.

<sup>29</sup> Dolet, *Erasmianus*, éd. par Telle, p. 158. Ma traduction.

<sup>30</sup> Cicero, *Pro Milone*, 104, ‘immo vero poenas ille debitas luerit’.

Dans l'épigramme II, 20, le ton semble avoir changé:

Quondam bella ferocia	Jadis, quand les généraux
Cum inter se atque duces Romulidae atque Afri	Descendants de Romulus et les Africains [se livraient des guerres sauvages
Ducebant animosius;	Avec une animosité particulière,
Tum, donec validus, vivus et integer,	Alors, tant que l'ennemi était valide, vivant [et en bonne santé,
Frendensque atque minans erat	Enragé et menaçant,
Hostis, cui, gladio cominus aggredi	Qui ne jugea pas louable et exceptionnel
Et telo appetere undique	D'attaquer corps à corps au glaive
Non laudabile, non egregium fuit?	Et de chercher à atteindre de partout [l'adversaire au javalot?
Ergo, dum fuit integer	Aussi, tant qu'il fut en bonne santé
Et pugnae cupidus, spicula senserit	Et désireux de combattre, aura-t-il senti nos [piques,
Nostra hostis Ciceronis et	L'ennemi de Cicéron
Galli (quae rabies?) nominis invidus.	Et le jaloux du nom français (pourquoi [cette rage?].
Iamiam parcere mortuo	Mais maintenant qu'il est mort
Mens est nec tacitam carpere postea	Je suis d'avis de l'épargner et de ne pas [déchirer un fantôme
Larvam vulnifico stylo.	Muet d'un stylet blessant.
Defunctum meritis sic modo laudibus,	Puisqu'il est mort, de louanges méritées, au [moins,
O Musae, meritum senem	Parons un vieil homme, ô Muses,
Ornemus. Rapuit Mors nimium rapax	Car il les a méritées. La mort aux doigts [trop crochus a ravi
Germanae patriae decus,	La gloire de la patrie germaine
Doctorumque decus quoslibet Itala	Et la gloire des savants, de tous ceux que la [terre
Tellus Gallaque proferat	Italienne et la terre française produisent
(Te Budaee tamen, te quoque Longoli?)	(Et pourtant tu existes, Budé, et toi aussi, [Longueil?],
Germanae patriae decus,	C'est la gloire de la patrie germaine
Doctorumque decus Mors rapuit rapax.	Et la gloire des savants que la Mort aux [doigts crochus a ravies.



Dolet fait mine de baisser la garde et de rendre hommage à Érasme. Mais derrière cette apparente mansuétude se cachent encore des rancœurs. L'humaniste orléanais rappelle la rage du Hollandais qui l'assimile à un animal, *quae rabies*, sa jalousie par rapport à la France, *Galli nominis invidus*, qui fait allusion à son différend avec Budé et à son appartenance à l'Humanisme du nord qui révere l'Italie mais dénie à la France tout droit à la *translatio studii*. En déclarant ne pas vouloir batailler avec Érasme maintenant qu'il est mort, Dolet critique encore le savant batave qui n'avait pas hésité, lui, à composer un portrait-charge de Longueuil six ans après la mort de ce dernier.

La pièce IV, 5 des *Carmina* constitue un tombeau en hommage au savant hollandais:

Ullone tempore decentius	Est-il une époque où, avec plus d'à propos,
Radiis suis Sol aureus imminutus est	Le soleil doré de ses rayons ait été amputé
Cessitque tenebris tristibus,	Et ait cédé aux funestes ténèbres
Quam quo orbis extincta interierun Lumina?	Que lorsque les Lumières de notre [monde s'éteignirent et moururent ?
Coelique Terraeque hoc modo	Et Ciel et Terre, à leur façon,
Praestantiora corpora testantur suos	Par leurs formes si belles, attestent
Casus, vicissim alia aliis	Leurs malheurs, tour à tour
Luctus speciem praebentia; nec magni Poli	Présentant à l'autre un visage chagriné; [et les feux
Ignes sine moestitia ferunt,	Du grand Ciel ne supportent pas sans [désespoir
Terrae opprimi ignes. Lumina sic Luminibus favent.	Que les feux de la Terre soient anéantis. [Les Lumières rendent ainsi hommage aux Lumières.

Dolet se révèle très elliptique; seul le sous-titre, *De eclipsi solis, quae anno a Virgine gravida MDXXXVI accidit; quo Erasmus Roterodamus et Faber Stapulensis e vita excesserunt*, cite explicitement Érasme; il est associé à un autre grand humaniste français, Lefèvre d'Étaples, comme pour minimiser sa prééminence dans la République européenne des lettres; enfin, le corps du poème privilégie l'évocation de l'éclipse de soleil qui eut lieu le 18 juin 1536 et à laquelle il compare implicitement la mort des deux savants.

### 3. Les réactions d'Érasme dans sa correspondance

Érasme refusa toujours de répondre à Dolet. À ses yeux, la meilleure défense résidait dans le silence, comme il le déclare à Merbellius dans la lettre 3005: 'Nunc nar-

rant Lugduni excusum librum acidum in me, autore Steph. Doletto [...] Eum nondum vidi et, si videro, non est animus respondere' ('on raconte que maintenant, à Lyon, on a édité un livre acide contre moi, dont l'auteur est Étienne Dolet [...]. Je n'ai pas encore vu ce livre et si je le vois, je n'ai pas l'intention de répondre');<sup>31</sup> plus loin, dans la lettre 3127, il dit à P. Mélancthon, qui lui avait promis dans la lettre 3120 de le venger dans un dialogue contre Dolet: 'De Dialogo quem quidam adornaverunt in Doletum, pene dixeram Oletum, vestrum esto iudicium. Mihi in hoc genus rabulas nullum videtur aptius ultionis genus quam silentium' ('À propos du Dialogue que certains ont concocté contre Dolet, j'aurais presque dit le Puant, qu'il en soit comme vous en jugerez. Quant à moi, rien ne me semble une vengeance plus adaptée, contre cette race de braillards, que le silence');<sup>32</sup> il crut même que Dolet n'était qu'un prête-nom pour Jérôme Aléandre, son ancien compagnon d'étude, avec qui il avait eu des démêlés à Venise et qu'il soupçonnait de vouloir se venger par ce biais.

Ainsi, Dolet tentait donc par la virulence de ses propos d'échapper à l'influence de l'érudit majeur de son époque. En vain, car par bien des traits, la pensée et l'œuvre d'Érasme paraissent avoir fécondé l'œuvre de l'humaniste français.

## II. *L'influence intellectuelle d'Érasme sur l'œuvre d'Étienne Dolet*

Si elle n'est jamais avouée, l'influence d'Érasme semble pourtant perceptible dans les œuvres poétiques de Dolet.

### 1. Les emprunts thématiques

Dolet suit Érasme dans sa démarche de réformateur: réforme du cœur humain mais aussi perception nouvelle de l'état monacal et de l'état marital.

#### A. La critique des défauts humains — pour vivre heureux, vivons follement!

Dans *l'Éloge de la Folie*,<sup>33</sup> et dans *l'adage* 1981,<sup>34</sup> intitulé *In nihil sapiendo iucundissima vita*, Érasme développe ironiquement l'idée que la vie est plus agréable pour les insensés que pour les savants. Cette thématique même apparaît dans

<sup>31</sup> Allen XI, Ep. 3005. 17–20. Ma traduction.

<sup>32</sup> Allen XI, Ep. 3127. 37–40. Ma traduction.

<sup>33</sup> Erasmus, *Moriae encomium*, in *ASD* IV-3, pp. 116–19, ll. 854–62 et 873–92.

<sup>34</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 1981, in *ASD* II-4, pp. 327–28.

l'épigramme II, 35, où le poète oppose la vie malheureuse des sages à celle, heureuse, des ignorants:

Desipere et stolidum esse in vita, quam nimis sagace	Qu'il vaut mieux être fou et niais dans la [vie que trop subtil,
Cautumque prudentemque, diffitearis	Prudent et avisé, ne serais-tu pas d'accord
Praestare? In stolidum quae cura cadit gravis vel altum	Pour l'affirmer? Le niais, quel souci [accablant peut tomber sur lui ou même
Somnum eripiens? Ludit, potat, palato	L'arracher à son profond sommeil? Il [joue, il boit, de son palais
Servit (seu dapibus, seu vino quaeritur voluptas)	Il est esclave (dans les festins ou dans le [vin il cherche son plaisir;
Potum, atque bene curatum lacessit	Et s'il a bu et qu'il est bien traité, il n'est [affecté
Sollicitudo nulla; hilaris semper diem revolvit	D'aucun souci. C'est toujours en riant [qu'il passe les jours,
Post alterum alterum; nonne is beatus?	L'un après l'autre: n'est-il pas heureux, [cet homme?
Prudentem, sapientem, vel paulo magis secundo	Mais l'homme avisé, le sage, au naturel un [peu mieux doué
(Hominum loquitur sic vulgus imperitum)	(Ainsi parle la masse ignorante des [hommes)
Et dextro natum ingenio quae cura laxat ulla?	Et habile, est-il un souci qui le laisse en [repos?
Amet, Venerem colat; aut amplos honores	Qu'il aime, qu'il honore Vénus ou qu'il [recherche de grands honneurs,
Ambiat, in virtutem incumbat Litterisque famam	Qu'il s'applique à la Vertu, et que, par les [Lettres,
Et sempiternum nomen aucupetur;	Il vise une réputation et un renom [éternels.
O stolido et stupido quantum cedit (tametsi utrique	Ô, combien il le cède à l'homme niais et [stupide (bien que tous deux aient
Sit cursus idem susceptus) caret alter omni	Pris la même voie); l'un n'a aucun
Sollicitudine consequiturque velut ioco quod optat;	Souci et atteint comme par jeu ce qu'il [désire;
Tabescit alter curis, uriturque	L'autre se consume dans les soucis, brûle
Igni gravi studii, quo spem concepit. Heus beatum	Dans le feu pesant de l'étude où il a placé [son espoir. Hé, trop heureux
Nimis, stolidum, et infelicem, sapientem.	Le niais, et malheureux, le sage.

Les deux humanistes développent une anecdote d'Horace dans les *Epîtres*:<sup>35</sup> s'appuyant sur l'exemple d'un Argien que sa famille guérit de sa folie et priva ainsi de ses plaisantes illusions, le Latin déclare préférer vivre dans l'ignorance plutôt que rongé de soucis. Mais là où Érasme, dans l'*Éloge de la folie*, développait l'opposition entre les deux types d'hommes en y revenant sur plusieurs paragraphes, et, dans les *Adages*, synthétisait l'anecdote en un court proverbe, Dolet choisit un moyen terme entre brièveté et *copia*. En outre, la formule finale de Dolet dépasse la pensée du Hollandais car l'Orléanais semble ironiser sur la célèbre formule christique *Beati pauperes spiritu*; le blasphème n'est pas loin alors qu'il n'effleurait pas la pensée d'Érasme.

### La philautie

Dans l'*Éloge de la folie*, l'écrivain fait parler son personnage éponyme qui présente une des compagnes, la Philautie, ou amour de soi;<sup>36</sup> il évoque aussi cette notion dans l'adage 753, *Strychnum bibit*.<sup>37</sup> Érasme se moque ainsi de la tendance humaine à s'adorer soi-même. Dans l'épigramme II, 42, Dolet reprend dès le sous-titre la notion de philautie avant d'abonder dans le sens d'Érasme:

Num insanus amor sui? Num amor sui caecus?	N'est-il pas insensé, l'amour de soi [L'amour de soi n'est-il pas aveugle?
Putes ne stultum, indoctum, avarum, sceleratum	Penserais-tu qu'un sot, un ignorant, un [avare, un criminel
Sortem suam cum sorte prudentis, docti,	Veuille changer en quelque façon son [propre sort
Largi, innocentis velle commutatam ullo	Avec le sort d'un homme prudent, d'un [savant, d'un généreux, d'un innocent?
Pacto? Aut si in aliquo aliquis placeat sibi plus aequo	Ou bien, si quelqu'un, sur un point [donné, est plus content de lui qu'il n'est juste,
(Etiam id velim positum sit in virtute) huncne	(Cela même, je voudrais que cela soit [regardé comme une vertu), cet homme,
Putas cumulari velle aliquanto parte	Penses-tu qu'il veuille engranger un [peu plus
Maiore virtutis? Sic sumus omnes facti,	De vertu? Ainsi sommes-nous tous [faits,

<sup>35</sup> Horace, *Epîtres*, 2. 2. 128–40.

<sup>36</sup> Erasmus, *Moriae encomium*, in *ASD* IV-3, p. 78, ll. 126–27 et p. 130, l. 76.

<sup>37</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 753, in *ASD* II-2, p. 278.

Natura sic omnes genuit. Vitiis caeci,

Ainsi la nature nous a tous créés. Aveugles  
[à nos défauts,

Virtute contenti, nimium superbimus.

Satisfaits de notre vertu, nous sommes  
[trop orgueilleux

À la différence d'Érasme, Dolet, entre apostrophes et énonciation polémique, se fait plus proche de l'invective et laisse percer son naturel vindicatif.

### B. L'état marital dans le *Genethliacum*

Érasme fut l'un des premiers humanistes à remettre en cause la supériorité de l'état monacal sur l'état marital. Dans l'*Encomium matrimonii*, il parle des douces relations qu'on peut établir avec son épouse: 'Quid enim dulcius quam cum ea vivere cum qua sis non benevolentiae modo, verumetiam corporum mutua quadam communione arctissime copulatus' ('car qu'y-a-t-il de plus doux que de vivre avec une femme très étroitement unie à nous par un lien réciproque non seulement de bonne amitié, mais aussi par un lien physique?')<sup>38</sup> ou lorsqu'il évoque ce lien inaltérable que constitue le mariage, 'uxoria charitas non perfidia corrumpitur, nulla simulatione obscuratur, nulla rerum mutatione convellitur, denique sola morte, immo ne morte quidem distrahitur' ('l'amour d'une épouse n'est entaché d'aucune perfidie, n'est assombri par nulle hypocrisie, n'est ébranlé par nul changement; enfin seule la mort le dissout, et même pas toujours').<sup>39</sup>

En 1539, quand son fils Claude naquit, Dolet reprit la tradition du chant de naissance héritée des Anciens et écrivit en son honneur un *Genethliacum*.<sup>40</sup> Dans la section centrale de ce recueil poétique, intitulée *Praecepta* et constituée de deux cent trente-sept hexamètres énonçant des principes moraux, Dolet évoque le sujet du mariage dans un esprit proche de celui d'Érasme:

At vero uxorem, cum qua consortia vitae  
Sunt obeunda diu, solvendaque funere tantum,

Mais ton épouse, avec qui la vie commune  
Doit être longtemps partagée et déliée  
[seulement par la mort,

Liberius tracta. Comes est, non serva, marito

Traite-la avec libéralité. C'est une  
[compagne, et non une servante,

Coniux [...]

Que la femme pour son mari [...]²

<sup>38</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, in *ASD* 1-5, p. 406, ll. 256–58. Ma traduction.

<sup>39</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, in *ASD* 1-5, p. 406, ll. 270–72. Ma traduction.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Langlois-Pézeret, 'Le *Genethliacum* d'Étienne Dolet'.

Ce passage reprend et synthétise les remarques du Hollandais. Ce dernier soulignait la communion des époux dans le mariage: ‘communione, mutua, cum ea cum qua’; Dolet lui fait écho avec le terme *comes* mis en valeur par la coupe penthémimère de l’hexamètre. Érasme insistait aussi sur la longévité de l’union que seule la mort pouvait rompre: à l’expression *sola morte* répond la formule *funere tantum* chez Dolet. Le maître-mot de ce passage semble être *liberius*: mis en valeur par sa place en tête d’hexamètre, il résume les thèses libérales du savant batave dans le domaine du mariage.

La plupart des thématiques analysées ci-dessus constituent des lieux communs, mais la dernière atteste que c’est bien Érasme, fondateur de ces thèses modernes, que suit Dolet. Ces emprunts révèlent que le jeune Orléanais a adopté le même système de valeurs morales et sociales que son aîné; ce n’est pas seulement l’effet d’une culture humaniste identique: il s’agit bien d’une concordance de pensée entre deux intellectuels. Par-delà la rivalité apparente et affichée se cache en somme une sorte de reconnaissance respectueuse pour la pensée d’Érasme et les multiples emprunts intertextuels dans les *Carmina* ne démentent pas cette impression.

## 2. L’intertextualité: les larcins lexicaux de Dolet aux *Adages*

Certes, les *Adages* ne constituent pas le seul recueil de proverbes à l’époque humaniste, mais Dolet prononce quelques allusions dans son *Erasmianus* qui invitent à penser que Dolet a puisé dans le recueil érasmien plutôt que dans un autre. Je tâcherai d’analyser la façon dont Dolet emprunte ces formules dans ses *Carmina*.

L’adage 255,<sup>41</sup> *talpa caecior* (‘plus aveugle qu’une taupe’), provient de Pliny l’Ancien (*Nat.* 11. 139) et s’applique aux hommes ‘qui supra modum caecutiunt aut qui minime iudicant’ (‘qui sont aveugles au-delà de toute mesure et qui réfléchissent très peu’). C’est dans ce même sens qu’Étienne Dolet en use dans les premiers vers de l’épigramme II, 18 où il dénonce les hommes incultes qui méprisent les Lettres:

Talpis natio caecior

Race plus aveugle que les taupes

Dolet varie très légèrement le proverbe puisqu’il se contente de remplacer le singulier *talpa* par le pluriel *talpis*; il explicite aussi plus loin l’objet de la comparaison pour s’attaquer à un groupe d’hommes bien précis, ceux qui ne reconnaissent pas

<sup>41</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 255, in *ASD* II-1, p. 366.

la portée des Lettres en politique; il use ainsi de la dimension générale de l'adage pour donner du poids à son argumentation d'humaniste civique.

L'adage 304 analyse l'expression *Ansam quaerere* ('saisir l'occasion'): 'id est captare occasionem rescindendae irritandaeque pactionis' ('c'est-à-dire saisir l'occasion de rompre et de dénoncer un pacte'), et propose la variante *ansam arripere*.<sup>42</sup> Cette expression se trouve justement dans la préface du livre I des *Carmina*, employée avec la même connotation belliqueuse puisque l'Orléanais accuse ses ennemis de saisir toutes les occasions de le calomnier:

Musarum iocis oblectare me visum est. Visum vero id est non tam oblectationis causa, quam nonnullorum obtreptatorum frangendorum nomine, qui maledicendi ansam eo in me arripiunt, quod Commentariis conscribendis tempus tantum dederim; perinde quasi maiora praestare nequeam et ad mediocria vel vulgaria sim solum ipse natus.

À la vérité, j'ai cru bon de faire cela non tant pour me délasser que pour anéantir quelques détracteurs, qui saisissent l'occasion de me calomnier sous prétexte que j'ai passé tant de temps à rédiger mes *Commentaires*, comme si j'étais incapable de proposer des œuvres plus importantes et que je n'étais moi-même né que pour des œuvres plus médiocres ou vulgaires.

Dolet fait allusion aux détracteurs de ses *Commentaires de la Langue Latine* qui susurraient qu'il avait dérobé ses fiches lexicales à son maître Simon de Neufville et qu'il était incapable d'une autre activité que d'en collationner de nouvelles, à la manière de Nosopon.<sup>43</sup> C'est pourquoi, explique Dolet plus loin, il a décidé de faire de la poésie et de montrer qu'il était capable d'être consacré dans ce domaine aussi.

L'adage 335,<sup>44</sup> *Asinus ad lyram* ('l'âne à la lyre'), dénonce les imbéciles qui font mine de comprendre dans toutes les situations. Dolet emploie cette expression dans l'épigramme III, 2 pour prouver qu'il n'est pas étonnant que les Toulousains n'aiment pas les arts:

Nec sane id mage mirum quam asinis barbiton et lyram	Cela n'est pas plus étonnant que de voir
	[des ânes mépriser le luth et la lyre,
Sordere, apposito ad rustica tantum et tribulos gregi.	Puisque leur troupeau s'adonne à la vie
	[rustique et aux châtaignes d'eau.

<sup>42</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 304, in *ASD* II-1, pp. 411–12.

<sup>43</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet, le martyr de la Renaissance*, trad. par Stryienski, p. 262.

<sup>44</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 335, in *ASD* II-1, pp. 434–36. À rapprocher de l'adage 3047, *Asinus ad tibiam*, qui a le même sens.

L'Orléanais adjoint le luth à la lyre. Il réduit les habitants de la cité palladienne à des barbares incultes, dignes des Gètes d'Ovide, grâce à la césure placée après *asinis*, traditionnelle chez Horace après le choriambes central de l'asclépiade majeur. Rappelons que Dolet eut de sérieux démêlés avec ses habitants en 1534, après avoir stigmatisé la barbarie de cette cité dans ses *Orationes duae in Tholosam*, où il défendait les confréries d'étudiants au nom de l'*amicitia* civilisatrice. L'adage permet de mieux illustrer la satire contre les Toulousains.

L'adage 1614,<sup>45</sup> *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurrit* ('on a beau chasser la nature à la fourche, elle revient pourtant à sa place'), emprunté à Catulle et à Horace,<sup>46</sup> stigmatise les défauts que l'on ne peut corriger; il appartient d'abord au domaine agricole. L'Orléanais l'emploie dans l'épigramme I, 39:

Mutare naturam, id non facile est; licet eam	Mais changer son naturel, ce n'est pas facile: [on a beau
Furca repellas, semper redit	Le repousser avec une fourche, toujours il [revient
Haeretque, quam antea magis multo sequax,	Et se fixe, beaucoup plus tenace qu'avant,
Nec prima linquit vestigia.	Sans laisser sa place initiale.

Dolet joue de la *variatio* en changeant de préverbe (*expellas* devient *repellas*), en remplaçant *recurrit* par son synonyme *redit* qu'il a peut-être trouvé chez Nizolius et qu'il complète avec *haeret* en une *contaminatio* cicéronienne,<sup>47</sup> puisque ce verbe accompagne le terme *vitia* dans la *Réponse des Haruspices* (57) pour dénoncer la perversité de Clodius.<sup>48</sup>

L'adage 3275,<sup>49</sup> *Vivus vidensque* ('de mon vivant et sous mes yeux'), emprunte une citation à l'*Eunuque* de Térence, où Phédria emploie cette formule proverbiale pour signaler sa vigilance vis-à-vis de Thaïs dont il est amoureux tout en se défiant d'elle. Dans l'épigramme I, 5, Dolet emploie cette expression en tête d'un poème où il déclare aspirer à la gloire et vouloir en jouir de son vivant, *vivens vidensque*. Le sens n'est pas tout à fait identique chez les deux auteurs: en usant de ce

<sup>45</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 1614, in *ASD* II-4, p. 98.

<sup>46</sup> Catullus, *Poèmes*, 105. 2; Horace, *Épîtres*, I. 10. 24.

<sup>47</sup> Dans le grand dictionnaire de Nizzoli, *Nizolius sive Thesaurus Ciceronianus*, p. 335, *redeo* apparaît comme le premier synonyme de *recurro*.

<sup>48</sup> Cicéron emploie l'expression *Viti[a] [...] in eo defixa atque haerentia*. Cf. Nizzoli, *Nizolius sive Thesaurus Ciceronianus*, p. 179 bis.

<sup>49</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 3275, in *ASD* II-7, p. 172.



proverbe en tête d'épigramme, Dolet énonce une profession de foi très matérialiste tout en signalant la conscience qu'il a des risques qu'il prend.

Dolet a donc fait son miel des *Adages* en leur apportant de légères modifications. Bien souvent aussi, il reprend textuellement les expressions proverbiales, affichant ainsi sa source d'inspiration.

L'adage 286 cite une expression de Quintilien,<sup>50</sup> *Omnium horarum homo*, 'homme de toutes les heures', qu'Érasme glose ainsi: 'Qui seriis pariter ac iocis esset accommodatus et quicum assidue libeat convivere, eum veteres omnium horarum homo appellabant', 'celui qui se consacrait aux activités sérieuses autant qu'aux joyeuses et avec qui il était plaisant de vivre, les Anciens l'appelaient "homme de toutes les heures"'.<sup>51</sup> Dolet s'applique cette formule à lui-même dans l'épigramme programmatique I, 4 (vv. 7–10):

Hominem omnium horarum esse me et versatilem	[...] je suis homme de toutes les heures [et [...] je me plie
Ad quodlibet vitae genus:	À n'importe quel genre de vie:
Non stoicum magis quam epicureum, si ferat,	Pas plus stoïcien qu'épicurien, si le cas s'y [prêtait.
Res. Libere vivere, vivere est.	Vivre libre, c'est vivre.

En plaçant le proverbe en tête de trimètre iambique, Dolet énonce son désir d'indépendance intellectuelle et idéologique, tout en affichant l'emprunt d'une maxime chère à Érasme qui l'avait recensée dans ses *Adages*, utilisée dans son colloque *Venatio* et appliquée à son cher ami Thomas More.

L'adage 362,<sup>52</sup> *Oleum et operam perdidi* ('j'ai perdu mon huile et ma peine'), appartient, d'après Érasme, au monde des gladiateurs et des palestres. L'Orléanais en use dans l'épigramme III, 36 (vv. 12–16), poème par lequel Dolet clôt le cycle des jeux Floraux auxquels il participa en 1534:

Sed forte si surdis data est	Mais si d'aventure à des sourds j'ai consacré
A me opera, et cecini	Ma peine et que j'ai chanté
Modo auribus duris, putent	Seulement pour des oreilles dures, [les Muses] [peuvent penser
Atque operam, atque oleum	Que j'ai totalement perdu
Hic perditum omnino mihi.	Mon travail et mon huile.

<sup>50</sup> Quintilianus, *Institution Oratoire*, 6. 3. 110.

<sup>51</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 286, in *ASD* II-1, pp. 389–90. Ma traduction.

<sup>52</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 362, in *ASD* II-1, pp. 452–54.

Dolet reprend textuellement l'adage d'Érasme qu'il affiche grâce au parallélisme du vers 15 souligné par l'anaphore de *atque*.

L'adage 370,<sup>53</sup> *Actum agere* ('traiter une affaire déjà traitée'), viendrait du domaine judiciaire et signifierait, selon Érasme, qu'on ne peut revenir sur une affaire déjà jugée et qu'on y perd son temps. Cette formule apparaît dans l'épigramme liminaire à Zoïle,

Non me fugit, Zoïle, fore multum risum	Il ne m'échappe pas, Zoïle, que tu riras [beaucoup,
Tuum, Poetam magnum modo quod me appellem,	Si parfois je me donne le nom de grand [poète
Modo beatum dicam genere omni versus.	Ou si d'autres fois je me dis heureux en [toute sorte de vers.
Sed actum ages, id si riseris: ego enim primus	Mais ce sera peine perdue, si tu en ris: moi [même, le premier,
Id risi, ut est plus Democriti risu dignum.	J'en ai ri, car voilà qui mérite plutôt le rire [de Démocrite.

Dolet se défend ici contre ceux qui le taxent d'orgueil lorsqu'il prétend maîtriser toute sorte de vers. L'adage, que l'Orléanais cite textuellement, lui permet d'anticiper l'attaque et de montrer que ses adversaires ont déjà perdu la partie.

L'adage 2027, *Culicem elephantī conferre* ('comparer un éléphant à un moustique') rappelle l'adage 966,<sup>54</sup> *Indus elephantus haud curat culicem* ('l'éléphant de l'Inde ne se soucie pas du moustique');<sup>55</sup> ces deux proverbes signifient qu'il est inutile de comparer les extrêmes. Dolet l'emploie dans la pièce liminaire à Zoïle (vv. 8–11):

Vestros latratus quo modo me terrere	Que vos aboiements me terrorisent, commen [pouvez-vous
Putatis? Ut leonem aprumve Melitenses	Le penser? Comme, face au lion ou au [sanglier, les petits chiens
Catelli; utque culex parvus Indicum elephantem,	De Malte, ou le petit moustique face à [l'éléphant de l'Inde,
Ut accipitrem multum validum imbelles picae.	Comme, face à l'épervier très puissant, les [faibles pies.

<sup>53</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 370, in *ASD* II-1, p. 456.

<sup>54</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 2027, in *ASD* II-5, pp. 55–56.

<sup>55</sup> Erasmus, *Adages*, 966, in *ASD* II-2, p. 464.

L'Orléanais glisse l'allusion à l'éléphant et au moustique parmi la mention d'animaux issus de diverses traditions: les chiens de Malte relèvent du domaine scientifique, puisqu'Aristote, dans l'*Histoire des Animaux* (612b10), les prend comme point de comparaison avec la fouine;<sup>56</sup> l'épervier et les pies proviennent de l'*Histoire Naturelle* de Pline car le savant latin compare leur fécondité (x, 162); toutes ces images illustrent la disproportion.

Enfin, j'aimerais évoquer pour finir un adage que Dolet n'utilise pas dans ses *Carmina*, mais comme emblème de son imprimerie; il choisit en effet la Doloire autour de laquelle figure la formule *Ad amussim polio atque perpolio* ('je polis et repolis avec minutie'); l'expression *ad amussim* ('au cordeau') ou 'avec minutie' se trouve à l'adage 490: Érasme y précise qu'elle vient du domaine de l'orfèvrerie, 'amussim quibusdam esse non lineam neque regulam, sed ferramentum quo fabri in poliendo utantur' ('le cordeau n'est, pour certains, ni une ficelle ni une règle, mais un outil en fer dont les artisans se servent quand ils polissent'). Dolet n'a pas trouvé mieux que cette expression pour signaler sa minutie d'imprimeur.

Dolet butina donc patiemment parmi les 'pierres précieuses' collectées par Érasme.<sup>57</sup> S'il ne s'incline pas explicitement devant le poids intellectuel de son adversaire, il admet, en les imitant, la valeur de ses travaux, comme en témoigne un passage des *Commentaires de la Langue latine*, où il le nomme 'vi[r] alioqui diligentiae non spernendae et eruditionis non vulgaris' ('homme en tout cas d'un zèle à ne pas mépriser et d'une érudition peu commune').<sup>58</sup> D'ailleurs, en lui empruntant maint et maint adages, Dolet ne trahit-il pas peu ou prou son esthétique cicéronianiste pour pratiquer un style éclectique, quintilianisant, pourquoi ne pas dire, en un mot, érasmien?

<sup>56</sup> L'adjectif *melitensis* pose problème car le lieu auquel il renvoie paraît difficile à situer: Strabon, en 6. 2. 11, assimile Mélité à Malte, alors que Pline l'Ancien, en 3. 52, situe cette île sur la côte dalmate. Pour plus de détails sur ce débat, je renvoie à *Callimachus*, éd. par Pfeiffer, I, 404.

<sup>57</sup> L'image des gemmes est employée par Érasme lui-même dans son épître dédicatoire aux *Parabola*, in *ASD* I-5, p. 88, ainsi que dans Allen II, Ep. 312. 47.

<sup>58</sup> Dolet, *Commentarii linguae latinae*, I, col. 88.

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## CONCORDE ET POLÉMIQUE DANS LES *COLLOQUES* D'ÉRASME

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On sait que le genre du dialogue est souvent considéré comme caractéristique de la Renaissance mais on a peu étudié l'apport d'Érasme dans l'élaboration de ce genre. Les *Colloques* d'Érasme sont le plus souvent analysés dans leur contenu mais moins souvent mis en relation avec les autres dialogues de la Renaissance ni avec leur théorisation.<sup>1</sup> Il m'a donc semblé intéressant d'examiner ces *Colloquia* dans leurs particularités formelles, pour en déduire quelques réflexions sur la nature du discours qui en ressort.

Il faut d'abord préciser, même si c'est une évidence, que la Renaissance n'invente pas le dialogue. Elle va cependant privilégier cette forme, du *Secretum* de Pétrarque aux dialogues de Sperone Speroni, en passant par de nombreux dialogues écrits dans tous les pays d'Europe entre le XIV<sup>e</sup> et le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Cet engouement pour le genre s'accompagne d'une volonté de théorisation. Mais si l'on pratique très tôt le dialogue, c'est relativement tard dans la période qu'on publie des théories sur le dialogue. Outre le petit ouvrage de Simon de Vallambert *De optimo genere disputandi colloquendique*, qui date de 1551,<sup>2</sup> c'est le *De dialogo* de Carlo Sigonio, publié en 1562,<sup>3</sup> qui prévaut ainsi que le court texte *Dell'arte*

<sup>1</sup> L'éminent ouvrage de Bierlaire, *Les Colloques d'Érasme*, par son titre même, appartient à cette catégorie. Mais on y trouve aussi des remarques formelles intéressantes. Pour le texte latin d'Érasme, nous nous référons à l'édition d'Amsterdam, éd. L.-E. Halkin, F. Bierlaire, R. Hoven, 1972: ASD 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Vallambert, *De optimo genere disputandi colloquendique*.

<sup>3</sup> Nous utilisons l'édition italienne, qui contient le texte latin: Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti. C'est nous qui traduisons en français.

*del dialogo* publié par Le Tasse en 1586.<sup>4</sup> On est assez loin, dans le temps, des *Colloques* d'Érasme, dont la première édition date de 1519, la dernière de son vivant de 1533. C'est la redécouverte de la *Poétique* d'Aristote, en 1508, qui a fait naître la réflexion sur les genres littéraires, et sur le genre dialogué en particulier.

Or, ces textes théoriques se caractérisent par le fait que le dialogue y est défini comme une mise en littérature de la dialectique. Derrière les analyses inspirées des théories d'Aristote ou de la pratique de Platon et de Cicéron, c'est à la *disputatio* que songent sans le dire les théoriciens du dialogue,<sup>5</sup> qui conçoivent ce genre comme un moyen de rhétoriser les débats que la *disputatio* universitaire les a habitués à pratiquer. Au moment où la dialectique scolastique est décriée, le dialogue est une manière de donner à la discussion une tournure policée, amicale, sans que pour autant on oublie de débattre âprement, selon les règles de la logique.

Les théoriciens du dialogue ne citent aucun auteur moderne. Dans leur conception, la théorisation n'est possible que dans le sillage de l'Antiquité et les exemples fournis sont censés être des modèles, et non pas simplement des illustrations. Les traités de Sigonio et du Tasse sont écrits explicitement pour aider les auteurs à écrire des dialogues.

Sigonio commence par faire entrer le dialogue dans la catégorie littéraire de l'imitation, et distingue une imitation des orateurs ou des historiens, qui imitent par 'utilité', c'est-à-dire pour persuader leur auditoire ou leurs lecteurs, et l'imitation de ceux qui imitent pour le plaisir (*voluptate*). Distinction intéressante qui isole la fiction désintéressée par rapport à la pratique utilitaire du récit, comme dans les plaidoiries d'avocat. Selon Sigonio, d'ailleurs, le dialogue se situe au confluent de trois 'arts' : l'art des poètes, celui des orateurs et celui des dialecticiens,<sup>6</sup> et Le Tasse affirme aussi que l'auteur de dialogues est à mi-chemin 'entre le poète et le dialecticien'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Le Tasse est lui-même auteur de dialogues. Son court traité a été écrit entre 1579 et 1585. Nous utilisons, pour les citations, l'édition en français : Tasso, *Discours sur le dialogue*, trad. par Vuillemier. Nous citons, pour le texte italien, l'édition moderne : Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo*, éd. par Ordine. Parmi les textes théoriques, on peut également citer l'*Apologia dei dialogi* de Sperone Speroni, qui date de 1574, et qui reprend bien des analyses de Sigonio.

<sup>5</sup> Voir sur ce point, Périgot, *Dialectique et littérature*, en particulier le chapitre sur les dialogues de Leonardo Bruni et sur ceux de Guy de Bruès.

<sup>6</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 142 : 'Tres enim sunt artes quarum praeceptis ac institutis dialogus informatur, nempe poetarum, oratorum et dialecticorum'.

<sup>7</sup> Tasso, *Discours sur le dialogue*, trad. par Vuillemier, p. 80. 'Quasi mezzo fra'l poeta e'l dialettico' (Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo*, éd. par Ordine, p. 54).

Le dialogue, affirme Sigonio, a été engendré par notre faculté naturelle et notre habitude de raisonner,<sup>8</sup> et notre auteur passe directement, et comme naturellement, de la définition de la dialectique par Aristote dans les *Topiques*, à la définition du dialogue:

[Aristoteles] cum in Topicis dialecticam ad congressus valere et disputationes dixit, quid alium quam ad dialogos doctorum hominum intellexit mutuis percontationibus de vi ac natura rerum omnium disquirentium, non necessariis sed probabilibus argumentis?

(Quand il [Aristote] dit que la dialectique sert à la confrontation et à la discussion, qu'a-t-il en tête sinon les dialogues des hommes doctes qui discutent en usant de questions réciproques sur la vraie essence de toute chose, au moyen d'arguments non nécessaires mais probables?)<sup>9</sup>

Sigonio décrit scrupuleusement l'art de disputer qu'implique le dialogue:

[D]ialectica supellex adiungatur necesse est, sine qua nec acutum ac difficile disputationis munus praeclari scriptor dialogi sustinere, nec idoneam poscendae aut ponendae quaestionis consuetudinem, aut probabilia quae sint ex rebus eliciendi, aut adversarii urgendi, aut ex eius forte insidiis tamquam ex laqueis elabendi, quae omnia ut dialecticae sic dialogorum sunt instrumenta, rationem cognoscere poterit.

(Il faut ajouter l'aide de la dialectique, sans laquelle celui qui écrit un dialogue de qualité ne pourrait soutenir le devoir subtil et ardu de la dispute ni connaître la manière adaptée de solliciter une question ou d'en proposer une, de tirer des éléments de la discussion des conclusions qui soient probables, de presser l'adversaire ou, si c'est le cas, de s'extraire de ses pièges comme de lacs, toutes choses qui sont les caractéristiques aussi bien de la dialectique que des dialogues.)<sup>10</sup>

Et il dira un peu plus bas qu'il pose 'que le dialogue est une sorte de dispute dialectique',<sup>11</sup> ce que dira à son tour Le Tasse.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, pp. 132–133: '[...] nostra ratiocinandi vis ac consuetudo peperit'.

<sup>9</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 152: 'Dialogum disputationem quandam esse dialecticam ponimus'.

<sup>12</sup> Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo*, éd. par Ordine, p. 49: 'E'l dialogo sarà imitazione d'una disputa dialettica'.

Au chapitre 6 de la *Poétique*, Aristote avait dit que l'histoire (le *muthos*) était l'âme de la tragédie. Sigonio reprend ce point, comme le feront Le Tasse et Sperone Speroni, pour faire de la *question*, du sujet de la discussion, l'âme du dialogue.<sup>13</sup> Le Tasse, comme aussi Sperone Speroni, insistent sur le fait que c'est la question qui importe dans un dialogue, et que cette question doit être une, ce sur quoi l'on insistait déjà à propos des disputes. Le Tasse, calquant, après Sigonio, son analyse du dialogue sur celle de la *Poétique* d'Aristote à propos de la tragédie et de la comédie, affirme que le dialogue se distingue du genre théâtral par le fait qu'il n'a pas besoin de représentation, et il parvient à cette définition: 'Le dialogue est imitation du discours, écrit en prose, sans représentation, pour l'utilité des citoyens et des philosophes'.<sup>14</sup> Cette dernière précision renvoie à la distinction qu'établit Le Tasse entre les deux objets possibles du discours dialogique:

- Les dialogues appliqués à des choses qui appartiennent à la contemplation portent sur la science et la vérité: ce sont des dialogues spéculatifs. Ils sont pratiqués par les philosophes.
- Les dialogues appliqués à des choses qui conviennent à l'action portent sur le couple élection/rejet: ce sont des dialogues moraux. Ils sont pratiqués par des citoyens.

On le voit, la référence à Aristote est centrale et Sigonio ne se contente pas de citer la *Poétique*: quand il évoque l'argumentation dans le dialogue, il ne cesse de citer l'*Organon*.

De cette alliance de principe entre dialectique et dialogue résulte pour Sigonio une conséquence importante: 'Le véritable personnage de dialogue ne peut être que quelqu'un empreint de la plus grande culture, capable de discuter de manière dialectique sur n'importe quel sujet qu'on lui propose'.<sup>15</sup>

Le sérieux du personnage s'accorde avec le sérieux du ton. Sigonio, tout au long de son traité, donne la préférence à Cicéron, comme modèle, parce que, mieux que Platon, il a su constamment respecter la *vraisemblance*, et surtout la *convenance*, ce *decorum* que le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle traduira par *bienséance*. Le *decorum*, c'est l'art

<sup>13</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 164: 'contentio [...] quae ut poematis fabula ab Aristotele, sic dialogi a nobis anima iure potest appellari'.

<sup>14</sup> Tasso, *Discours sur le dialogue*, trad. par Vuillemier, p. 72. 'E direm che'l dialogo sia imitazione di ragionamento scritto in prosa senza rappresentazione per giovamento de gli uomini civili e speculativi' (Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo*, éd. par Ordine, p. 45).

<sup>15</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 152: 'Ex quo apparet germanam dialogi personam vere nullam aliam dici posse, nisi quae optimis imbuta litteris de quacumque proposita re possit dialecticorum more disserere'.



d'adapter le dialogue aux lieux, aux actions et au caractère des personnages. Sur ce dernier point, Sigonio reprend l'analyse d'Aristote sur les personnages de tragédie, qui doivent être, dans le dialogue aussi, nobles, adaptés, ressemblants (par rapport à la tradition) et cohérents.

Sigonio affirme, en outre, qu'il faut choisir avec soin le personnage principal d'un dialogue, 'car le lecteur est enclin à penser que, dans un dialogue de ce type, l'interlocuteur le plus autorisé est celui qui expose notre point de vue sur le sujet'.<sup>16</sup>

Les auteurs de traités rapprochent donc constamment dialogue et dialectique. Mais ils sont aussi sensibles à l'autre aspect du dialogue, à son aspect rhétorique. Sigonio met d'ailleurs en confrontation les deux aspects: 'Quaquam autem dialogus quaedam est dialecticae disputationis imago, ornamentorum tamen ac luminum plus quam ipsa dialecticorum pugna atque altercatio poscit'. ('Bien que le dialogue soit une sorte d'image d'une dispute dialectique, il requiert plus d'ornements et d'enluminures qu'un débat et une confrontation entre dialecticiens'.)<sup>17</sup>

Il consacre donc une grande partie de son traité à ces 'ornements'. Il rappelle ainsi la distinction entre les trois manières d'introduire le dialogue:<sup>18</sup> la première quand la discussion est présentée directement comme au théâtre; la seconde quand elle est racontée de telle manière que le discours des interlocuteurs apparaît comme une imitation, comme dans l'épopée; et la troisième, qui est un mélange des deux premières.

Le Tasse reprend cette distinction tripartite mais insiste, en outre, sur un aspect qui n'est pas développé chez Sigonio.<sup>19</sup> Il existe, dit-il, deux façons de poser une question dans un dialogue: celle-ci peut être posée par celui qui sait, et qui veut ainsi faire surgir la vérité de l'interlocuteur, ou elle peut être posée par celui qui ne sait pas. Le Tasse donne la supériorité au modèle qu'il qualifie de grec, dans lequel celui qui sait, par des questions habiles, enseigne et discute. Au contraire, dans le modèle latin, chez Cicéron, c'est l'ignorant qui interroge. Or, par cette façon d'organiser le dialogue, Cicéron, selon Le Tasse, ressemble plus à un rhéteur qu'à un dialecticien.

<sup>16</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 180: 'Nam fere qui princeps sermonis eiusmodi, is nostram de rebus putatur aperire sententiam'.

<sup>17</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 156.

<sup>18</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, pp. 162–63.

<sup>19</sup> Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo*, éd. par Ordine, pp. 39–40. Sigonio comme Le Tasse emprunte cette distinction tripartite entre dialogue représentatif, historique et narratif à Castelvetro, *Poétique*.

Concernant le style des dialogues, les auteurs se heurtent à une contradiction. Dans l'Antiquité, le dialogue a été rattaché, au même titre que l'épître, au style *humilis*, plus simple que le style historique. Mais la poésie élevée des dialogues de Platon et le style souvent orné des dialogues de Cicéron incitent les deux théoriciens à prôner tous deux un style plus élevé que celui de l'épître, sauf dans les parties où prime la discussion.

Si l'on se tourne maintenant vers les *Colloques* d'Érasme, on se rend compte qu'ils n'entrent que très partiellement dans les cadres fournis par les théoriciens du dialogue. D'abord, les *Colloques* ne sont au départ que des exercices pour élèves, et les premiers dialogues ne sont pas très élaborés du point de vue des idées. C'est d'ailleurs un des éléments passionnants des éditions des *Colloques* qu'elles révèlent la genèse du genre. Érasme rassemble dans les premiers colloques des formules qui se rattachent toutes à un même thème: comment, par exemple, saluer quelqu'un en latin. La première édition des *Colloques* s'appelle d'ailleurs *Colloquiorum formulae*. Puis sont introduites de courtes saynètes qui sont au point de départ du *Colloque* littéraire abouti. Les premiers colloques sont donc très nettement des exercices, mais ce sont des exercices de rhétorique, et non de dialectique. Il ne s'agit pas d'apprendre aux élèves à discuter mais de leur fournir et de leur faire apprendre des formules qui seront à l'origine de la *copia* qu'ils manifesteront ensuite en écrivant. Il s'agit aussi de les initier à un latin élégant mais familier comme une langue vivante, et Érasme, quand il justifiera leur écriture dans le *De utilitate colloquiorum*,<sup>20</sup> affirmera: 'Iuventutem illecto vel ad elegantiam sermonis latini, vel ad pietatem' ('J'initie la jeunesse à l'élégance de la conversation en latin et à la piété') selon l'alliance,<sup>21</sup> constante chez lui, de la culture et de la foi.

Il s'agit donc d'abord d'un travail de rhétorique très formel. Peu à peu, ces *Colloques* cessent d'être des exercices scolaires pour devenir de véritables dialogues, mais même dans leur version la plus aboutie, ils ressemblent fort peu aux dialogues dialectiques décrits par Sigonio et Le Tasse.

Les *Colloques* ne sont d'abord que rarement des dialogues dialectiques: il s'agit, avec Érasme, principalement de *colloqui* et non pas de *disputare*. C'est là une distinction essentielle. La plupart des dialogues de la Renaissance, quoiqu'on les implique souvent dans les analyses récentes sur la 'conversation' sont loin d'en relever et cachent sous des dehors mondains une véritable technicité dialectique.

<sup>20</sup> Ce texte est une sorte de post-face qu'Érasme ajoutera à l'édition des *Colloques* de 1526 et qu'il augmentera encore en 1529. Voir *ASD* I-3, pp. 735–52.

<sup>21</sup> *De utilitate colloquiorum*, *ASD* I-3, p. 741, ll. 19–20. Le mot *elegantia* rappelle en outre l'intérêt que porte Érasme au travail rhétorique de Valla dans ses *Elegantiae Linguae latinae*, dont Érasme proposa d'ailleurs un résumé: *ASD* I-4, pp. 187–351.

Chez Érasme, en revanche, le dégoût de la dialectique qui s'étale partout dans ses écrits n'est pas de pure forme: aucun de ses *Colloquia* ne relève, de bout en bout, de la *disputatio*. Tout au plus a-t-on des passages disputatifs. Dans *Ichthyophagia*, par exemple, les deux personnages conversent, exposent leurs idées, l'un tente de persuader l'autre à l'aide d'exemples édifiants ou de contre-exemples. Mais sans qu'ils aient évoqué le fait que l'un d'eux est convaincu par l'autre, ils en viennent tacitement à un consensus qui leur fait critiquer ensemble la même déviance, en l'occurrence le plus grand intérêt accordé par les hommes aux lois humaines qu'aux lois divines. Érasme a bien en tête le schéma de la dispute, mais il semble s'en détourner volontairement. Quand des personnages discutent fermement et presque techniquement, on tombe aussitôt dans la parodie, comme dans *Proci et puellae*,<sup>22</sup> où le débat dialectique par lequel le jeune homme démontre le bien fondé du mariage à la jeune fille se double d'un badinage amoureux, ou dans *Ichthyophagia* encore, où ce sont des personnages inadaptés à une dispute théologique qui s'expriment. De même, parce qu'Érasme imite l'art du *colloqui*, souvent les personnages font évoluer la discussion par association d'idées. Dans *Puerpera*, on part d'une discussion entre un homme et une femme sur la supériorité de l'un ou de l'autre, puis on passe à la critique des nourrices et à la nécessité d'un bon allaitement, pour en venir à une réflexion sur le rôle essentiel du corps dans le bon fonctionnement de l'esprit.

De plus, les personnages, même quand ils discutent, n'ont jamais recours à la conviction rationnelle et technique. Par exemple, jamais un personnage 'par ses interrogations, ne pousse son interlocuteur à se contredire lui-même et à reconnaître enfin qu'il est vaincu' comme le prône Sigonio dans son traité.<sup>23</sup> Les dialogues d'Érasme, si l'on reprend la distinction du Tasse, ne sont pas des dialogues spéculatifs mais des dialogues moraux, utiles aux citoyens et non aux philosophes. Les personnages d'Érasme n'usent jamais du vocabulaire scolastique mais argumentent principalement par l'exemple,<sup>24</sup> que celui-ci soit historique, scripturaire

<sup>22</sup> *Proci et puellae*, ASD 1-3, pp. 277-88.

<sup>23</sup> Sigonio décrit ainsi Socrate dans son débat avec Gorgias et le donne en exemple, Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, pp. 242-44: 'His interrogationibus [...] eo prope praecipitem impulit Gorgiam Socrates, ut quod a principio intenderat, ipsum sibi in sermone cogeret adversari ac se prope victum confiteri'.

<sup>24</sup> On n'a que de très rares exemples de l'utilisation de pratiques scolastiques. Ainsi, dans *Ichthyophagia*, le boucher affirme que quand on pêche contre les lois humaines, on pêche *immediate* contre l'homme, et *mediate* contre Dieu, tandis que quand on pêche contre les lois divines, c'est l'inverse. Et il ajoute aussitôt: 'Si mihi concedis scholasticorum flosculis uti' ('Si tu me permets d'user des fleurettes des scolastiques'). Le mot de 'flosculi' renvoie péjorativement

ou anecdotique. Les personnages, enfin, ne s'entêtent jamais dans leur opinion et ne veulent pas la défendre coûte que coûte; ils sont très souvent persuadés par le sermon de leur sage interlocuteur, comme dans *Uxor mempsigamos sive coniugium*.<sup>25</sup> Parfois même, le personnage interroge pour être convaincu. Ainsi, dans le très beau colloque *Confabulatio pia*,<sup>26</sup> le personnage qui parle le plus explique la façon dont il prie. Les questions de son interlocuteur sont souvent à la limite de la contradiction, mais on revient sans cesse au principe du dialogue cicéronien où c'est l'ignorant qui pose des questions pour s'informer. Souvent, enfin, les interlocuteurs sont d'emblée d'accord l'un avec l'autre.

Ces *Colloques*, d'autre part, imitent la conversation familière. Ils sont, comme le titre l'indique, *familiaria*.<sup>27</sup> Et c'est cette familiarité qui les rend très différents des autres dialogues de la Renaissance, constamment empreints d'une certaine majesté. Chez Érasme, on a des répliques souvent courtes à la manière des dialogues de comédie latine et même quand on discute de choses très sérieuses,<sup>28</sup> on n'abandonne jamais le ton de la conversation courante, ce qui est d'autant plus rare que le dialogue est écrit en latin. Le *colloquium*, parce qu'il se veut *familiaire*, manque donc au premier devoir rhétorique d'un dialogue: le *decorum*, qui permet d'apporter de la dignité aux personnages.<sup>29</sup> S'excusant d'avoir, dans *Ichthyophagia*, fait parler un poissonnier et un boucher de questions théologiques,<sup>30</sup> Érasme écrit,

à la notion d'ornement inutile. Or, ce sont habituellement les ornements rhétoriques qu'on qualifie ainsi. (Ce passage, présent dans l'édition de Leyde, 1703–06, est absent de l'édition *ASD* 1-3, pp. 495–536).

<sup>25</sup> *Uxor mempsigamos sive coniugium*, *ASD* 1-3, pp. 301–13.

<sup>26</sup> *Confabulatio pia*, *ASD* 1-3, pp. 171–81.

<sup>27</sup> Ce désir de familiarité nous paraît ambigu dans un texte écrit en latin. Or, chez Érasme, la question de la langue ne se pose jamais: c'est en humaniste, dans la lignée de Valla, qu'il utilise le latin dans toutes ses œuvres, avec une optique rhétorique selon laquelle le latin est une langue élégante qui contribue à *faire* l'œuvre littéraire indépendamment de toute distinction entre langue vulgaire et latin. Il peut ainsi se targuer d'écrire en latin des œuvres familières.

<sup>28</sup> Érasme, d'ailleurs, dans ses *Colloques*, cite souvent Plaute, le plus populaire des comiques latins.

<sup>29</sup> Érasme est sensible lui aussi à cette dimension du dialogue antique puisqu'il fait dire à l'un de ses personnages, dans le *Banquet religieux*: 'Car Cicéron n'était pas impudent au point d'avoir représenté Caton autrement qu'il n'était et d'avoir oublié dans son dialogue la convenance que l'on doit rechercher par dessus tout dans ce genre littéraire'. Erasmus, *Éloge de la Folie, Adages, Colloques*, trad. par Chomarat et Ménager, p. 248. Texte latin, *ASD* 1-3, p. 252, ll. 651–53: 'Nec enim tam impudens erat M. Tullius, ut alium Catonem finxerit quam fuerit: et in dialogo parum meminerit decori, quod in primis spectandum est in hoc scripti genere'.

<sup>30</sup> On est d'ailleurs ici à la limite de la vraisemblance tant ce boucher et ce marchand de

dans le *De utilitate colloquiorum*, avoir eu le désir de faire parler de théologie 'sur un ton plus familier et plus simple',<sup>31</sup> loin de toute technicité mais loin aussi d'une certaine vraisemblance. Cette volonté d'écriture familière peut d'ailleurs aller loin. On sait quel scandale Érasme provoqua en faisant dialoguer, dans *Adolescentis et scorti*,<sup>32</sup> un jeune homme et une prostituée laquelle, en outre, appelle affectueusement son interlocuteur 'Mea mentula'!

D'autre part, comme plus tard dans le *Cymbalum mundi*, on trouve chez Érasme un principe de dialogue que l'on pourrait appeler performatif, dans lequel dire c'est faire. Les personnages décrivent les actions qu'ils font mais aussi les choses qu'ils voient. Ce n'est pas tout à fait de la description puisque l'on n'est pas dans un récit, et que l'on n'est pas non plus sur une scène de théâtre. Par le fait que le dialogue n'est pas une représentation, il pousse à la création d'une réalité donnée comme présente, que les personnages désignent à l'aide de déictiques alors qu'elle n'est que mots.<sup>33</sup> Ainsi, dans le colloque *De lusu*,<sup>34</sup> Érasme mêle des phrases qui renvoient à la fois au jeu de balle pratiqué pendant le dialogue et à la réflexion sur le jeu, comme si les personnages commentaient leur jeu en le pratiquant, et désignaient un événement contemporain de son énonciation.<sup>35</sup>

Les *Colloques* sont donc en fait, plutôt que des dialogues au sens dialectique, des entretiens. C'est au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle que ce terme fleurira et c'est en ce siècle que Samuel Chappuzeau traduisant les *Colloques* d'Érasme, leur donnera le titre d'*Entretiens familiers*.<sup>36</sup> On pourrait presque dire qu'il faut attendre la période classique, pour que les *Colloques* d'Érasme trouvent véritablement leur définition. Le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui tourne définitivement le dos à la dispute, qui prône l'accord

salaisons sont savants, quoiqu'Érasme cherche à justifier ces connaissances à l'intérieur du dialogue.

<sup>31</sup> *De utilitate colloquiorum*, ASD 1-3, p. 747: 'Quod si quis calumniatur personis sordidis affingi theologicam disputationem, [...] huiusmodi personis opus erat familiarius crassiusque rem tractaturo.'

<sup>32</sup> ASD 1-3, pp. 339-43.

<sup>33</sup> *Néphalion sumposion* (*Le Banquet sobre*) commence par 'Vidistine unquam **hoc** horto quidnam amoenius?' (ASD 1-3, p. 747). Et dans *Talorum lusu*, ASD 1-3, p. 626, l. 19: 'Suffecerit **haec** mensa.'

<sup>34</sup> ASD 1-3, pp. 163-64.

<sup>35</sup> On retrouve ce principe dans beaucoup d'autres dialogues, mais en particulier dans un autre dialogue sur le jeu: *Talorum lusu*.

<sup>36</sup> On voit d'ailleurs l'évolution du traducteur: dans l'édition de 1653 (Leyden: Vingart), le titre est le suivant: *Colloques d'Érasme fort curieusement traduits de latin en français pour l'usage des amateurs de la langue*. En 1662, en revanche, le titre est devenu *Les Entretiens familiers* (Paris: Jolly, 1662). Il existe une autre édition qui s'intitule *Entretiens* (Genève: Widerhold, 1669).

entre les devisants d'un dialogue et cultive l'art de la conversation, fait bien la différence entre les colloques, ou entretiens,<sup>37</sup> et les dialogues issus de la *disputatio*,<sup>38</sup> qui disparaissent à cette époque.

Mais quelle est la source des *Colloques* d'Érasme? Quand on les examine, on décèle une triple filiation.

La première est celle des dialogues antiques. Platon est très souvent évoqué, et quand Érasme écrit l'*Apotheosis Capnionis* en souvenir de Reuchlin,<sup>39</sup> il se souvient manifestement du début du *Phédon* pour amorcer le récit de la mort de son ami. Mais dans la forme, c'est surtout le dialogue cicéronien qui l'inspire. C'est en particulier dans les divers *Banquets* d'Érasme qu'on retrouve cette dignité des personnages qui sont, comme chez Cicéron, des notables unis par l'*amicitia*. On y retrouve aussi l'atmosphère de la villa de Tusculum avec cette conception très cicéronienne et qui deviendra très humaniste de l'*otium* à la fois épicurien et austère.<sup>40</sup> Érasme emprunte aussi à Cicéron la conception rhétorique du dialogue et surtout le procédé des questions de l'ignorant au savant.

La deuxième est celle des dialogues des Pères de l'Église.<sup>41</sup> Certes, ces dialogues sont fort divers et on y trouve aussi bien des principes dialectiques que rhétoriques. Les dialogues de saint Augustin s'inspirent de ceux de Cicéron mais sont nettement dialectiques, ceux de Cyrille d'Alexandrie sont extrêmement techniques et scolastiques même si l'on retrouve dans ses interlocuteurs le principe du maître et de l'élève, du vieux et du jeune et de questions à la manière cicéronienne. Les dialogues de Grégoire Le Grand, en revanche, tendent nettement à l'hagiographie et ne comportent pas de débat. Ces dialogues, cependant, ont un point commun: ils mêlent constamment la culture antique et la Bible, la tradition

<sup>37</sup> On peut citer par exemple les *Entretiens d'Ariste et Eugène*, écrits en 1671 par le Père Bouhours, docte grammairien qui veut lui aussi, faire œuvre pédagogique. Dans ses dialogues, les personnages causent sur des sujets divers mais ne discutent jamais.

<sup>38</sup> Au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, Simon de Vallambert est le seul des théoriciens du dialogue qui insiste sur la double nature possible des dialogues. Son ouvrage, intitulé *De optimo genere disputandi colloquendique* fait, en effet, la différence entre les dialogues où l'on dispute et ceux où l'on converse.

<sup>39</sup> *Apotheosis Capnionis*, ASD 1-3, pp. 267-73.

<sup>40</sup> Sur cet épicurisme chrétien souvent défendu par Érasme, voir l'introduction de Michel Onfray à la traduction de certains *Colloques*: Erasmus, *L'Épicurien et autres banquets*, trad. par Priel.

<sup>41</sup> Les quelques généralités que j'énonce ici mériteraient d'être étayées par un travail systématique de comparaison avec les dialogues patristiques, surtout quand on sait les relations complexes qu'entretient Érasme avec les Pères de l'Église.

des rhéteurs et le désir de Dieu.<sup>42</sup> Ils tendent en outre à présenter une doctrine ou en tout cas une vérité morale. On pourrait dire qu'un certain nombre de dialogues patristiques sont des *expositiones*, terme employé par Sigonio, qui le définit ainsi: 'Expositionem appello cum qui praecipiendi partes habet [...], alieno, ut sit, rogatu aperte quid de proposita sentiat quaestione demonstrat'. ('Quand je dis exposition, j'entends le procédé par lequel celui qui a le rôle d'enseigner [...] répondant à la requête d'un autre personnage, manifeste directement sa pensée à propos de la question proposée'.)<sup>43</sup> Or, beaucoup de *Colloques* fonctionnent comme des expositions. Le personnage exprime sa conception de la vie, toujours en relation avec la doctrine évangélique, à un interlocuteur qui n'intervient que pour approuver ou commenter brièvement. Dans d'autres *Colloques*, c'est par une histoire édifiante que les personnages informent leur interlocuteur sans que celui-ci fasse autre chose qu'interroger avec curiosité. Cette histoire peut être directe comme dans *Naufragium* où un rescapé raconte son aventure;<sup>44</sup> elle peut être aussi indirecte, comme dans *Exorcismus sive spectrum*,<sup>45</sup> où un personnage raconte ce qu'un autre personnage a fait et dit. C'est un procédé très utilisé par Érasme, qui amplifie en fait le principe de l'*exemplum* rhétorique à portée édifiante qu'on trouve souvent utilisé chez les Pères de l'Église.<sup>46</sup>

Mais la troisième filiation, la plus souvent citée, est celle des dialogues de Lucien. Il est clair que c'est d'eux que s'inspire directement Érasme.<sup>47</sup> On trouve chez Lucien, le principe du dialogue 'représentatif', c'est-à-dire où les personnages s'expriment directement, comme au théâtre. Comme chez Lucien, aussi, on

<sup>42</sup> Sur cette culture, qui est en fait celle des moines, malgré l'hostilité d'Érasme à l'égard de la vie monastique, voir Leclercq, *L'Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu*. On retrouve dans l'écriture d'Érasme ce que dit J. Leclercq p. 106: 'Le Moyen Âge monastique est essentiellement patristique, parce qu'il est tout pénétré de sources antiques, et, sous leur influence, centré sur les grandes réalités qui sont au cœur même du christianisme [...] Surtout, il est à base d'interprétation biblique, et d'une interprétation semblable à celle des Pères, fondée comme la leur sur la réminiscence, le rappel spontané de textes pris dans l'Écriture elle-même'.

<sup>43</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 220.

<sup>44</sup> *ASD* 1-3, pp. 325-32.

<sup>45</sup> *ASD* 1-3, pp. 417-23.

<sup>46</sup> En particulier chez Grégoire Le Grand, Cyrille d'Alexandrie, saint Augustin. Ce principe de récit dans le discours sera repris par Marguerite de Navarre, puis par de nombreux romanciers du XVII<sup>e</sup> et du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

<sup>47</sup> Rappelons qu'Érasme a lui-même traduit un certain nombre de dialogues de Lucien et qu'il a dédié ce travail à l'archevêque de Canterbury, ce qui suppose qu'il y attachait un certain intérêt. Dans sa lettre dédicatoire, il qualifie ces traductions de 'nugas sane, sed literatas' (Allen I, Ep. 261. 2). Voir *ASD* 1-1, pp. 379-627.



ne perd pas de temps à planter le décor. La plupart du temps, les personnages se retrouvent et s'interrogent très vite sur le sujet qui sera celui du colloque, comme s'ils se rencontraient dans la rue. C'est encore à Lucien qu'Érasme peut emprunter le procédé qui consiste à désigner des objets ou à décrire des actions comme au théâtre, ce qui produit un effet de réel constamment démenti par l'absence de représentation. C'est à Lucien qu'Érasme emprunte la vivacité des dialogues, leur caractère de débat non dialectique et surtout leur caractère familier, avec des personnages qui ne sont pas forcément des hommes d'une grande dignité ou d'un rang social élevé. En France, on retrouve ces caractéristiques dans le *Cymbalum mundi*, paru en 1537, mais dans fort peu d'autres dialogues.

Or, si l'on revient aux théoriciens du dialogue, ceux-ci se montrent peu enclins à proposer Lucien comme modèle pour l'écriture des dialogues. Le Tasse se contente de mettre au premier plan, dans la littérature grecque, les dialogues de Platon, en second ceux de Xénophon et en troisième ceux de Lucien sans autre commentaire.<sup>48</sup> Mais Sigonio se montre beaucoup plus sévère. Rappelant ainsi que l'habitude de confier la parole à des personnages cultivés a été observée par tous les auteurs de dialogues, il ajoute: 'nous la voyons finalement négligée et transposée inconsidérément par Lucien chez les dieux, les morts et les prostituées, dans le but de susciter le rire.'<sup>49</sup> Sigonio revient aussi longuement sur le fait que les dialogues antiques, ceux de Platon, de Xénophon, de Cicéron, ont toujours traité de sujets sérieux: 'Dieu, la nature, notre âme, la vertu, l'État, les affaires domestiques, la raison, la science, la rhétorique et la poétique'. Seul Lucien a dépravé et corrompu cette tradition 'en forçant le dialogue à parler de sujets ridicules, d'amours et de ruses de courtisanes'.<sup>50</sup> Sigonio cite les justifications de Lucien, dans le dialogue intitulé 'Les Tribunaux', où l'auteur antique écrit

qu'il a trouvé le dialogue dans un triste état: paraissant morne à la foule non cultivée, devenu sec et hérissé à cause des continuelles interrogations, peu amène et peu agréable au grand public, et qu'il l'a d'abord habitué à marcher sur la terre à la manière du commun des mortels, l'a forcé à rire et l'a rendu plus agréable à ceux qui le regardaient, en le mêlant avec la comédie.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo*, éd. par Ordine, p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 152: 'quam consuetudinem [...] neglectam postremo a Luciano ad deos, ad mortuos et ad meretrices risus, ut ipse confessus est, captandi gratia temere translatam esse animadvertimus'.

<sup>50</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 154: 'Hanc ergo consuetudinem ab omnibus ante sancte custoditam primus etiam, ut dixi, Lucianus depravavit atque corruptit, cum de rebus ridiculis, de amoribus et fallacis meretriciis dialogum loqui coegerit'.

<sup>51</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 152: 'In eo vero qui *Iudicia* nominatur, se dia-



Or, Érasme aussi se vante de faire descendre le dialogue sur terre,<sup>52</sup> de faire rire par des jeux de mots ou des situations ridicules, et il ne craint pas de faire parler les courtisanes. Sigonio cite un autre long passage du même dialogue de Lucien, où le Dialogue lui-même, devenu personnage, se plaint d'avoir été dévalorisé par son auteur et d'avoir perdu, à cause de lui, le vêtement tragique qu'il endossait jusque là, pour un autre 'comique et satirique'. Lucien, dans ce passage, se défend d'avoir nui au dialogue, il pense au contraire qu'en cessant de le faire servir à résoudre des subtilités de philosophes il lui a redonné vie.<sup>53</sup> Mais Sigonio ne partage nullement l'avis de Lucien et se montre très sévère à son encontre :

Quo consilio quantum de vetere illa dialogi dignitate detraxerit, cum flagitiosissimum ac turpissimum quenque sermonem in dialogum introduxerit, nemo non videt. Verum nos Luciani parum laudata consuetudine praetermissa, ad praeclaram illam Platonis ac Ciceronis, quam unam hoc loco exquirimus, animum disputationemque referamus.

Ce que Lucien, par ce choix, a retiré à l'ancienne dignité du dialogue, en y introduisant des discours très déshonorants et très obscènes, tout le monde peut le voir. Nous cependant, mettant de côté cette manière peu louable, nous nous référerons, dans notre pensée et dans notre discussion, à celle, remarquable, de Platon et de Cicéron, que nous avons seule l'intention d'examiner ici.<sup>54</sup>

Et jamais, ensuite, dans son traité, il ne se réfère à Lucien pour le citer en exemple.

Or, le point de vue de Lucien et celui d'Érasme se rejoignent complètement : ils ont le même désir d'un dialogue dans lequel le caractère populaire se confonde avec la *parrhesia*, ce franc parler qui ne craint pas de dénoncer en ridiculisant, loin de toute analyse philosophique ardue.

logum ait excepisse, qui imperitae multitudinis tristis videbatur ac continentibus percontationibus aridus et spinosus nec vulgo gratus et iucundus, et primum humi incedere in humanam vitae consuetudinem assuefecisse et ad risum compulisse et suaviorem iis redidisse qui spectarent, quod cum eo comoediam commiscuerit'.

<sup>52</sup> Dans le *De utilitate colloquiorum*, ASD I-3, p. 746, ll. 179–81, Érasme écrit, mais sans se référer à Lucien, auteur trop sulfureux : 'Socrates philosophiam coelo deduxit in terras: ego philosophiam etiam in lusus, confabulationes, computationes deduxi'.

<sup>53</sup> Sigonio cite ici, en le remaniant légèrement, un long passage de *La double accusation ou Les Tribunaux*. Dans ce dialogue, qui a la structure d'une comédie, Lucien est amené à se défendre devant Jupiter des accusations que lui adressent séparément la Rhétorique et le Dialogue. La première l'accuse de l'avoir abandonnée après qu'elle l'eut rendu célèbre ; Le second de l'avoir dégradé en lui faisant traiter des facéties, alors qu'il planait jusque là sur les hauteurs philosophiques. Le verdict sera favorable à Lucien dans les deux cas.

<sup>54</sup> Sigonio, *Del Dialogo*, éd. par Pignatti, p. 156.

On comprend mieux, à partir de cette analyse de la filiation des *Colloques*, le caractère provocateur qu'ils représentent par leur hybridité et la raison pour laquelle ces œuvres de fiction, ces œuvres rhétoriques et didactiques, ont été constamment victimes de la censure. La rédaction du *De utilitate colloquiorum* est d'ailleurs la preuve de la nécessité où fut Érasme de s'expliquer sur ses *Colloques*.<sup>55</sup>

Ceux-ci, en effet, traitent des sujets les plus épineux en matière de religion, tout en comportant fort peu de débats. Ils imitent une conversation à bâtons rompus où les arguments relèvent du bon sens, où les personnages sont généralement des amis, qui se retrouvent avec plaisir, et qui se convainquent l'un l'autre à la fin, ou sont d'emblée d'accord sur des points qui, dans la vie réelle, déchirent les théologiens les plus sérieux. Or, on voit Érasme, dans le *De utilitate colloquiorum*, comparer son œuvre aux *Facéties* du Pogge et minimiser le sérieux qu'on attribue à ses positions.

C'est là une spécialité d'Érasme que d'écarter tout sérieux. Quand il écrit ses diverses apologies du mariage, il se défend d'avoir voulu écrire un ouvrage sérieux mais se cache derrière l'ambiguïté énonciative de la *declamatio*.<sup>56</sup> Même quand il écrit son ouvrage théologique en faveur du libre arbitre, il l'intitule *diatribe*, renvoyant encore ainsi à un travail de rhéteur plutôt que de théologien. C'est constamment un travail rhétorique, portant sur la langue plutôt que sur des sujets, que revendique Érasme. Ainsi, alors que le dialogue humaniste se veut une œuvre éminemment sérieuse, qui tire ce sérieux à la fois de la *disputatio* médiévale et de la dignité des personnages antiques, Érasme, constamment, rappelle qu'il ne fait pas œuvre '*seria*' et qu'on ne saurait lui reprocher des opinions qui n'ont rien de réel et qui appartiennent à ses personnages. En fait, il mêle, avec plus ou moins de bonne foi, les notions de fiction (*fabula*) et de sérieux. Parce qu'il y a, dans ses *Colloques*, une mise en scène enjouée, que ses personnages aiment les jeux de mots et les plaisanteries, Érasme feint de croire que cet enjouement ôte tout sérieux aux critiques, pourtant fort âpres et fort précises, qu'il met dans leur bouche.

<sup>55</sup> Voir sur ce point les textes de censure des *Colloques* par la faculté de théologie de Paris, édition de Leyde, 1703–06: *LB*, ix, 928–54. Voir aussi l'ouvrage de F. Bierlaire sur la réception des *Colloques* (Bierlaire, *Les Colloques d'Érasme*), et Rummel, *Les 'Colloques' d'Érasme*, chap. iv: 'L'Accueil fait aux *Colloques*', pp. 97–125: Érasme est d'abord victime du carme Nicolas Egmondanus, professeur de théologie à la faculté de Louvain, qui l'attaque pour ses positions sur le jeûne, la confession, les indulgences et les vœux. En 1525, des dominicains écrivent un libelle contre la conception de la confession qu'il expose dans les *Colloques*. Puis c'est Noël Béda, de la faculté de théologie de Paris, qui commande un examen des œuvres d'Érasme et fait condamner ses *Colloques* en 1526. La Faculté les condamne de nouveau en 1528 et 1530.

<sup>56</sup> Voir dans Périgot, *Dialectique et littérature*, le chapitre intitulé 'Érasme ou la *declamatio* contre la dispute théologique', pp. 309–54.

Or, derrière la façade irénique et la fiction facétieuse, se cache une immense charge polémique. Car le sujet même du *Colloque*, on l'a dit, est souvent épineux : reliques, culte des saints ou de la Vierge, pèlerinages. Ainsi, dans le *Banquet religieux*, des amis se réunissent autour d'une table et font de l'exégèse biblique en amateurs. Dans *Virgo misogynos*,<sup>57</sup> un jeune homme cherche à détourner une jeune fille dont il est l'ami d'entrer dans les ordres. Le principe que suit souvent Érasme est qu'à l'intérieur du cadre du colloque, les personnages sont dans un univers de concorde et de tolérance et ne contestent pas fondamentalement leurs positions respectives. Le questionneur s'informe, sans plus. Ce procédé auquel Érasme a recours pour donner l'impression d'un univers de concorde et de tolérance est en réalité une bombe polémique dans la mesure où le personnage qui parle, n'étant pas contesté, peut affirmer comme des vérités d'évidence ce qui est justement taxé d'hétérodoxie par l'Église. Les conséquences d'un tel procédé se manifestent clairement, par exemple, dans l'*Inquisitio de fide*:<sup>58</sup> le personnage d'*Aulus* (Érasme) en interroge un autre qui s'appelle *Barbatus*, et qui représente Luther au dire même d'Érasme dans son *De utilitate colloquiorum*. Le but du dialogue est de montrer que les positions des luthériens seraient facilement compatibles avec la foi catholique. *Aulus*, d'ailleurs, ne débat jamais avec *Barbatus* et ne se scandalise jamais des propos les plus provocateurs de son interlocuteur. Il semble les approuver tacitement et n'interroger que pour se former, non pour vérifier la *doxa* des propos tenus. La situation du dialogue est telle qu'à première lecture et sans apparat critique, on pourrait facilement croire que ce *Barbatus* en butte à la censure n'est pas Luther mais Érasme lui-même, et l'on comprend la déception, quelques années plus tard, des luthériens qui découvrent soudain qu'Érasme refuse la Réforme. En fait l'ambiguïté fondamentale de la manière d'écrire d'Érasme vient de son refus du débat, de la *disputatio* confondue par lui avec la *contentio*. S'accorder semble extraordinairement simple dans les *Colloques*, parce que les personnages sont intimement convaincus que le bon sens accompagné de liberté de parole et de respect des Écritures leur donne le droit de discuter de tout, mais jamais au point de troubler la réalité. À plusieurs reprises, des personnages affirment qu'on ne saurait ni aller à l'encontre du pouvoir temporel ni s'opposer à des pratiques qui sont confirmées par l'habitude. On peut donner son avis (fût-il des plus polémiques!), mais on ne réforme pas. On affirme la préférence pour des pratiques évangéliques, mais on les tempère aussitôt en disant qu'elles ne doivent pas s'opposer aux pratiques de l'Église catholique.

<sup>57</sup> ASD I-3, pp. 289–97.

<sup>58</sup> ASD I-3, pp. 363–74.

Mais si les opinions des personnages ne s'opposent pas nettement, leurs actions, elles, s'opposent souvent. Même si Érasme emprunte aux Latins un goût très prononcé pour le réalisme qui rappelle les *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide ou le théâtre de Plaute, sa description des situations quotidiennes n'est jamais purement réaliste. Toujours s'y ajoute la dénonciation d'une situation et l'exaltation d'une autre.<sup>59</sup> C'est dans cette mesure qu'Érasme retrouve le caractère binaire de la *disputatio*: non pas dans la discussion mais dans la représentation de l'action. Comme le dit Erika Rummel à propos du *Naufragium*:

Les actions des personnages principaux sont choquantes et par conséquent ridiculisées en contrepartie de celles qui représentent l'idéal chrétien. Ces actions fournissent alors une leçon morale, et servent d'exemple au lecteur.<sup>60</sup>

Mais ces personnages 'principaux', s'ils sont les acteurs du drame du naufrage, ne sont pas les locuteurs du dialogue. C'est dans l'action du récit que les personnages démontrent la 'mauvaise' attitude, tandis que les interlocuteurs du dialogue manifestent *a contrario* les véritables valeurs chrétiennes. Et l'on retrouve tacitement dans ces *Colloques* la fonction hagiographique de l'*exemplum* moral inversé: c'est l'histoire négativement exemplaire des mauvais chrétiens qui montre au lecteur la vérité selon Érasme. Ainsi encore, dans *Funus*,<sup>61</sup> le récit d'un des interlocuteurs décrit la mort de deux personnages. L'un meurt de façon fastueuse, en privilégiant, dans son testament, les ordres mendiants au détriment de sa famille dispersée dans divers couvents; l'autre meurt d'une façon que l'on doit interpréter comme simple et édifiante. Les interlocuteurs refusent de juger les deux manières de mourir,<sup>62</sup> mais le récit a déjà établi le *bon* choix. De même, beaucoup de *Colloques* racontent l'histoire d'une tromperie. Il s'agit soit de dénoncer la tromperie, soit, le plus souvent, de se moquer, avec le trompeur, de la sottise de la victime. Cette victime devient alors l'archétype d'un personnage condamnable: alchimiste, personne qui croit aux spectres ou qui s'entiche de toutes les pseudo-reliques, etc. Mais ce personnage n'est pas un des locuteurs. L'adversaire n'est donc pas celui contre lequel on débat mais une troisième personne, l'absent du colloque. C'est à l'extérieur

<sup>59</sup> Par exemple dans le dialogue *Diversoria* (ASD 1-3, pp. 333-38), où un interlocuteur raconte ses expériences dans diverses auberges d'Europe, le caractère documentaire cache une réflexion sur le confort selon un chrétien.

<sup>60</sup> Rummel, *Les 'Colloques' d'Érasme*, p. 92.

<sup>61</sup> ASD 1-3, pp. 537-51.

<sup>62</sup> Le dialogue s'achève ainsi: 'Fortasse non aeque diiudico uter decesserit christianius' (ASD 1-3, p. 551, ll. 498-99): 'Je ne peux dire avec équité lequel a eu la mort la plus chrétienne' (Erasmus, *Éloge de la Folie; Adages; Colloques...*, trad. par Menager, p. 356).

que se situe l'adversaire et, entre gens de bonne compagnie, on se moque de l'ignorant ou du méchant comme dans *Naufragium*. Il semble ainsi qu'on soit, sans le dire, dans un système d'exclusion semblable à celui qu'énoncera Rabelais dans le *Gargantua*, par 'L'inscription mise sus la grande porte de Theleme': 'Cy n'entrez pas, hypocrites, bigots,'<sup>63</sup> etc. Les locuteurs du dialogue sont des gens qui, même quand ils ont un gros défaut, demeurent fréquentables. Ce n'est pas le cas des personnages dont ils parlent.

Ce qui accentue aussi le caractère polémique de ces *Colloques*, c'est la pratique de l'ironie, procédé qu'Érasme emprunte également en partie à Lucien. Si l'on applique à cette ironie l'analyse actuelle des linguistes qui la définissent comme polyphonie énonciative, on comprend que les personnages ne disent pas le contraire de ce qu'ils pensent mais affirment des choses qui peuvent être interprétées à deux niveaux. Le principe du dialogue cicéronien, où c'est l'ignorant qui interroge, est ainsi subverti par le modèle lucianique, car la question de l'ignorant n'est alors plus une 'vraie' question mais une inquisition plus perfide. Érasme, parfois, pratique une sorte d'ironie maïeutique, lorsqu'un personnage en interroge un autre pour lui montrer qu'il se trompe. Mais quand cette ironie s'applique à des personnages hors dialogue, elle est alors empreinte de dérision et de mépris à l'égard de ceux qui se fourvoient. Loin que ces dialogues, pleins d'amitié et de concorde, traduisent la tolérance, ils manifestent au contraire, dans l'affirmation de thèses pourtant souvent hétérodoxes, une conviction intime étrangère à toute possibilité de contradiction. La position évangélique, toujours teintée de juste milieu, devient ainsi une attitude intellectuelle et morale qui dénote l'être supérieur face à la foule sotte et suiviste.

Or, cette pratique de l'ironie a une répercussion sur les personnages qui ne sont pas toujours homogènes et parfaitement cohérents. En fait l'ironie des *Colloques* tient pour une grande part à leur contenu argumentatif. C'est parce qu'Érasme veut démontrer quelque chose que la parole des personnages est ironique. Si on était au théâtre et si c'était l'action qui prévalait sur le sujet, les questions seraient de vraies questions, mais parce qu'on est dans un contexte argumentatif, il faut que les questions sur le pèlerinage ou les reliques soient biaisées. Or, si l'on analyse l'ironie comme une 'contradiction argumentative',<sup>64</sup> on note que la parole de certains personnages, à cause de l'utilisation que fait Érasme de l'ironie, perd de sa cohérence psychologique et morale. Ainsi, dans le colloque *Peregrinatio*

<sup>63</sup> Rabelais, *La Vie très horrible du grand Gargantua*, chap. LIV, f. 143<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Berrendonner, *Éléments de pragmatique linguistique*, p. 185.

*religionis ergo*,<sup>65</sup> le principe est celui d'un personnage qui questionne ironiquement un interlocuteur naïf sur le dernier pèlerinage que celui-ci a accompli. Le personnage qui répond devient donc la dupe de son interlocuteur sans cesser d'être son ami. Le répondeur naïf considère que partir en pèlerinage, baiser des reliques sont des actes de piété dignes d'approbation; l'interrogateur pense au contraire que ces pratiques sont des actes de crédulité stupides et mécaniques. Ses questions ironiques entraînent des réponses qui démontrent la stupidité de l'interlocuteur. En outre, le double langage ironique entraîne une double entente: quand le partisan des pèlerinages raconte avec émerveillement qu'on lui a fait adorer comme reliques les crottes de nez d'un saint, sa parole, indirectement adressée au lecteur, qui est un second interlocuteur, dénonce ce dont elle fait l'éloge. Mais dans un même dialogue, le questionneur n'est pas toujours ironique et le répondeur pas toujours naïf. Selon le principe de concorde, l'amitié entre les personnages combat l'hostilité qu'engendre l'ironie. D'autre part, Érasme, soit par prudence, soit par refus du rejet pur et simple de l'orthodoxie, ne va pas jusqu'à condamner radicalement le culte des saints et des reliques. Certains passages cessent donc d'être ironiques pour redevenir axiologiques et le personnage crédule semble soudain avoir raison.<sup>66</sup> On oscille ainsi sans cesse entre un énoncé qui raille et un autre qui loue ce qu'il dénote. Érasme cultive l'équivoque sur la valeur argumentative de ses énoncés et pratique souvent un niveau d'énonciation qui va à l'encontre de la vraisemblance psychologique du personnage.

Enfin, il faut revenir sur une dernière caractéristique que nous avons déjà évoquée. Les personnages d'Érasme, à la suite de ceux de Lucien, disent qu'ils font quelque chose sans le faire.<sup>67</sup> Ces dialogues utilisent le principe de la *mimêsis* théâtrale, mais il s'agit d'une *mimêsis* purement verbale qui ne s'accompagne d'aucune représentation. Les pièces de théâtre radiophoniques nous ont habitués à ce genre de pratique, mais au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, le procédé est assez rarement utilisé. Tout au plus, dans les introductions de dialogues du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, les personnages peuvent-ils 'désigner' un bel endroit propice à la conversation, s'y installer et commencer à parler. Mais dans les *Colloques*, on est constamment sur une scène où les mots servent de substitut aux gestes. Les personnages ne se contentent donc pas de par-

<sup>65</sup> ASD- 1-3, pp. 470-94.

<sup>66</sup> On retrouve le même procédé dans *Cyclops sive evangeliophorus* (ASD 1-3, pp. 603-09), où le personnage qui est un rustre et porte un lourd évangile est ridiculisé comme un benêt qui n'a pas compris que l'Évangile se porte à l'intérieur de soi.

<sup>67</sup> Nous renvoyons ici à l'analyse très suggestive de Berrendonner, *Éléments de pragmatique linguistique*, pp. 75-137 et qui répond à l'ouvrage d'Austin, *Quand dire, c'est faire*, trad. par Lane.

ler d'une question, ils agissent verbalement, dans un entre-deux entre théâtre et dialogue, et ils décrivent référentiellement des gestes qu'ils n'accomplissent pas. Les paroles deviennent donc actes par la magie de la fiction portée à un degré supérieur à ce qu'elle est dans un dialogue ordinaire. Or, si Érasme utilise à plein la notion de fiction et se rapproche ainsi du théâtre, c'est pour donner à ses dialogues le plus d'irréalité possible, si bien que les réalités du sujet sur lequel conversent les personnages doivent rester, selon Érasme, hors d'atteinte du jugement des institutions. Le procédé de l'exposition permet, à l'intérieur d'un discours, tous les procédés du récit et de la description.<sup>68</sup> En ce sens le colloque *Echo* est emblématique de l'écriture d'Érasme.<sup>69</sup> Dans ce colloque intraduisible, un personnage bavarde avec la nymphe *Echo* qui, pour toute réponse, ne fait que répéter les dernières syllabes de son interlocuteur. Mais ces syllabes forment un sens, en latin ou en grec, si bien que celui-ci ne se rend pas compte qu'il s'agit d'une simple répétition de ses propres paroles.

Érasme semble vouloir, par cet usage de la fiction, se rapprocher de la pratique des rhéteurs, en refusant, avec beaucoup de mauvaise foi, que ses colloques soient autre chose qu'un pur jeu verbal et en retirant toute portée aux sujet traités. Or, c'est justement par là qu'il dépasse le simple maniement formel de la langue pour accéder à ce que l'on appellera, à partir du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la 'littérature', avec le principe d'une fiction qui devient intéressante pour elle-même, *voluptate*, comme disait Sigonio. Ainsi, certains *Colloques* mineurs sont de vraies fictions merveilleuses, comme l'*Epithalamium Petri Aegidii*,<sup>70</sup> où l'un des personnages, tandis que son compagnon ne voit rien, voit, lui, le chœur des Muses et les trois Grâces et bavarde avec elles, qui se rendent à un mariage.

Mais le problème est justement que les censeurs d'Érasme ont bien pris pour des actes ce qu'Érasme donnait pour une simple fiction; ils ont donné un poids à cet équivalent verbal de l'acte qui, selon Érasme, est censé n'avoir aucune portée dans la réalité. Érasme a donné une valeur performative à des verbes, mais n'a pas accepté que la réalité le rattrape.<sup>71</sup> C'est l'existence d'un référent identifiable qui

<sup>68</sup> Érasme ne fait d'ailleurs pas de différence entre récit et théâtre. Dans *Exorcismus sive Spectrum*, le personnage raconte son histoire en la découpant en cinq actes comme une tragédie. Sur le procédé de la description, voir Bierlaire, *Les Colloques d'Érasme*, p. 117.

<sup>69</sup> ASD 1-3, pp. 555-58.

<sup>70</sup> *Epithalamium Petri Aegidii*, ASD 1-3, pp. 411-16.

<sup>71</sup> Berrendonner, *Éléments de pragmatique linguistique*, p. 104: 'L'octroi généralisé ou tout simplement abusif d'une valeur performative à n'importe quel verbe est une conduite qui expose à bien des malheurs; à agir ainsi, on passe vite pour fou ou insolent, et l'on s'expose à diverses formes de sanctions'.



valide un énoncé et permet de l'accepter comme discours vrai. Or, chez Érasme, il n'y a pas de référent au discours exprimé. Le lecteur du xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle a donc tendance à lui en trouver un dans la réalité et c'est au nom de ce réel que les censeurs demandent des comptes à Érasme. Mais lui-même affirme tenir, en quelque sorte, un discours mensonger auquel on ne doit pas croire.<sup>72</sup> Il énonce une fausseté de fait (la fiction) mais une vérité de discours (le contenu du dialogue) et son autorité donne, malgré lui, un poids à ces mots qu'il voulait non sérieux. On le remarque dans l'usage des noms grecs pour les personnages: ce procédé éloigne apparemment le personnage du réel en le situant hors des réalités du xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle; mais en même temps, le sens symbolique du nom lui redonne un rôle dans la réalité: *Eubulus* donne forcément de bons conseils.<sup>73</sup>

Ainsi donc, si les *Colloques* d'Érasme se veulent moins des discours de vérité que des fictions empruntées à la réalité familière, le principe très complexe d'un discours sérieux et théologique soutenu par une fiction prétendue non sérieuse entraîne le dialogue dans un va-et-vient entre vérité et mensonge qui n'est pas assumé. Érasme, tout en refusant systématiquement le principe d'un dialogue-dispute qu'il considère comme un vain bavardage, invente des *Colloques* où la concorde affichée dans une conversation familière est constamment contredite par un discours qui se révèle bien plus polémique que ne l'eût été un dialogue résolument 'sérieux'.

<sup>72</sup> Il ose écrire dans le *De utilitate colloquiorum*, ASD 1-3, p. 742, ll. 27–28: 'Est hoc nimirum sanctissimum fallendi genus, per imposturam dare beneficium'. ('C'est un genre de tromperie très saint que celui qui consiste à faire du bien par l'intermédiaire d'une imposture.')

<sup>73</sup> Forme latine du grec eu-boulos. On retrouve ce personnage dans les deux dialogues qui se font pendant: *Virgo misogynos* et *Virgo poenitens*.



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## THE ERASMIAN REPUBLIC OF LETTERS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Hanan Yoran

**T**he term Republic of Letters — *Respublica litteraria* — was used by contemporaries and is used by scholars to denote the community of Renaissance humanists.<sup>1</sup> It is particularly suitable, I believe, for describing the Erasmian humanists of the beginning of the sixteenth century. For the term highlights the most distinctive feature of Erasmian humanism, namely its relative autonomy vis-à-vis power. Erasmus and the circle of humanists gathered around him created the identity of the universal intellectual, the citizen of an autonomous Republic of Letters, whose only commitment is to the common good. Since the image of Erasmus, transmitted by his generation to posterity, coincides with the modern notion of the intellectual as the disinterested and universal thinker, there is a tendency to see Erasmus's as the purest form of humanism, uncontaminated by 'foreign' interests and ideologies. Much of the modern scholarship takes this position. Sometimes the point is made explicitly, but more often it is implied by the analysis of the intellectual activity and products of the Erasmian humanists; in neither case is the subject problematized.

One notable exception is Norbert Elias's celebrated study of the civilizing process, which attempts — though rather as an offshoot — to account for Erasmus's autonomy. Elias, who locates Erasmus's *De civilitate morum puerilium* at the centre of his analysis of developments of manners, highlights Erasmus's

<sup>1</sup> The term *respublica litteraria* was first used in 1417 in a letter written by the Venetian humanist Francesco Barbaro to his Florentine friend, Poggio Bracciolini. Later, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it was commonly used to refer to the community of the humanists. See Waquet, 'Qu'est-ce que la République des Lettres?'

critical view of his society, his avowed goal to educate and transform society and his disapproval of the aristocratic code of manners and of aristocracy in general. He concludes that Erasmus enjoyed greater independence than intellectuals in both previous and succeeding centuries.<sup>2</sup> Elias's account for Erasmus's independence is, however, questionable. He views this independence as characteristic of humanism in general, arguing that the humanists were a 'class of intellectuals' uncommitted to any specific social group. In his analysis, this was the result of a temporary dislocation of power at a time when the feudal aristocracy was already in eclipse while the new absolutist aristocracy had not yet fully come to power.<sup>3</sup> Apart from the suspicious grand historical generalization, Elias's understanding of humanism cannot be accepted in view of the extensive research on humanism done in the last few decades.

Humanism flourished in practically every political and cultural context in fifteenth-century Italy and sixteenth-century Europe. Wherever a humanist centre emerged, far from being independent it was almost always strongly related to the ruling establishment and the dominant classes. This relationship is especially clear when humanist political thought is considered, as most political works composed by humanists were written on behalf of a specific polity. The political theories elaborated or propagated by these works reflected hegemonic ideologies. In this respect, there was little difference between humanists in republican Florence, aristocratic Venice, monarchic Naples, theocratic Rome, or princely Milan, to name just some of the important centres of humanism in Italy.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, this symbiotic relationship between the humanists and the dominant establishment was inherently linked to the premises of humanist discourse. This last term must be carefully defined. As the humanists held different views in practically every field it is clear that humanism was not a coherent body of knowledge or a set of shared views. Ultimately, humanist thought cannot be defined in terms of its contents. Humanist discourse can, however, be defined as a set of distinct, though usually implicit, ontological and epistemological presuppositions, from which emerged a characteristic attitude regarding the understanding and the representation of reality. Humanist discourse was non-metaphysical and non-

<sup>2</sup> Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. by Jephcott, pp. 56–67.

<sup>3</sup> Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. by Jephcott, pp. 58–59.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Baron, *The Crisis of Early Modern Italian Renaissance*; Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists*; King, *Venetian Humanism*; Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples*; D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome*; Ianziti, *Humanistic Historiography Under the Sforzas*.

theological. It assumed that human reality was a human artefact, the product of human intentions and actions, rather than a reflection of a given metaphysical and divine order.<sup>5</sup> It presupposed further that human reality was inherently symbolic, that social entities were *meaningful* ones. Consequently knowledge was defined in humanist discourse as set of procedures for the production and disclosure of meanings.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge was thus embedded in social reality: it was knowledge of meaningful human artefacts, such as texts and social institutions, and was inherently practical. The humanists' intellectual activity was therefore legitimately associated with their specific milieu, with particular traditions, interests, and ideologies. The humanists' affirmation of the *vivere civile*, that is, the life of continuous public involvement, was directly derived from these premises. Their commitment to the *vita activa* provided the legitimacy for pursuing public careers — which offered of course also material and symbolic rewards — by the humanists. Moreover, the professional identity of the humanists was not based on any specific institution such as the scholastic university. The result was that to a great extent the humanists were economically and socially dependent on patronage, that is, on an unmediated relationship with the powerful.

Elias is therefore wrong in arguing that the humanists were a class of independent intellectuals. What he considers as a general characteristic of humanism was in fact a specific and quite exceptional feature of Erasmian humanism (it is worthwhile mentioning that Elias does not refer to other humanists besides Erasmus in his analysis). What he views as a fully explained phenomenon in terms of external causes is now seen as a problem that must be accounted for in terms of specific circumstances and dynamics that distinguished one version of humanism.

Lisa Jardine's iconoclastic book, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, provides such an account. Jardine exposed the various strategies utilized by Erasmus and the humanists gathered around him in constructing the image of the leader of the Republic of Letters as an unbiased intellectual, the educator of Europe. Employing their literary talents and command of the new art of printing, the Erasmian

<sup>5</sup> The two seminal interpretations of humanism of Eugenio Garin and Hans Baron highlight this dimension. See for example Garin, *Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance*, trans. by Munz, esp. pp. 1–17, 37–77, and Baron's articles collected in Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*.

<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly this dimension of humanist discourse is highlighted by scholars who subscribe to the 'linguistic turn' taken in the human sciences. See for example, Struve, *The Language of History in the Renaissance*; Struve, *Theory as Practice*; Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla*; Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology*; Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance*; Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*.

humanists presented — sometimes through conscious distortions — Erasmus as the true heir of the Italian humanism of the *quattrocento*. Erasmus would also be the modern Jerome whose personal piety and critical and literary skills were uniquely suited to the reform of Christianity.<sup>7</sup> The great merit of Jardine's approach is the denaturalization of Erasmus's position as the universal intellectual. Rather than the given position of the humanist, the role of the universal intellectual is shown to be a carefully constructed and maintained social place. However, Jardine's methodology and rhetoric overemphasize the manipulative dimension of this project as she depicts the construction of what she sees as a false and misleading 'image'. The complete dismissal of the self-presentation of one's object of inquiry is only slightly better than the unquestioned acceptance of it. Behind this dismissal lies a deeper theoretical problem in Jardine's approach: while she (rightly) assumes that social identities are social constructs, the polemical layer of her study implicitly associates the socially constructed with the false and the inauthentic.

By reading several adages of Erasmus I will try to show that the identity of universal intellectual was a key dimension of the discourse of Erasmian humanism. It both grew from and sustained Erasmian humanism. From the Republic of Letters, the emblem of the autonomy of Erasmian humanism, Erasmus spoke to Christendom, and it rendered his words meaningful. Citizenship in this republic provided the intellectual resources and the symbolic capital Erasmus needed to think through and present his social and political criticism and his reform proposals. But at the same time the notion of the universal intellectual was most problematical *in humanist discourse itself*. The citizenship of the Erasmian Republic opened a rift between the social being of the Erasmian humanists and their intellectual commitments, for ultimately the very existence of a separate intellectual realm contradicted the fundamental ethical and epistemological presuppositions of humanist discourse.

### *The Adages of the Universal Intellectual*

The Froben edition of 1515 of Erasmus's *Adages* was aptly termed by Margaret Mann Phillips 'the utopian edition'.<sup>8</sup> For this edition includes several adages — practically independent essays — which clearly expressed Erasmus's utter dissatisfaction with contemporary society, politics, and culture and his utopian vision

<sup>7</sup> Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*.

<sup>8</sup> Phillips, *The 'Adages' of Erasmus*, p. 96.

of a fully civilized Christendom.<sup>9</sup> In my reading of some of these adages I shall emphasize how these writings constructed and implied the identity of the autonomous intellectual. Erasmus's views of church and state may serve as point of departure for this analysis.

The famous adage *Sileni Alcibiadis* is largely dedicated to Erasmus's criticism of the church, and particularly of its claims for temporal power.<sup>10</sup> This was of course a key issue in medieval political thought. The ideological conflict between church and state involved some of the prominent intellectuals, including Dante, William of Ockham, and Marsiglio of Padua, and was the occasion for the elaboration of the most original and forceful medieval political theories.<sup>11</sup> As Quentin Skinner notes, however, the issue hardly bothered most humanists.<sup>12</sup>

Erasmus, like Lorenzo Valla before him, was an exception. His position concerning the place of the institutional Church within the secular world issued from the fundamental premises of his religious thought.<sup>13</sup> Of the various traditional definitions of the Church, Erasmus clearly preferred the widest, seeing the Church as the community of all Christians. Criticizing the view that stressed the importance of the institutional Church, he argued in the *Sileni Alcibiadis* that 'Ecclesiam vocant Sacrificos, Episcopos, ac summos Pontifices' ('they give the name of "the Church" to priests, bishops and supreme pontiffs'), while in truth 'Ecclesia populus est Christianus' ('it is Christian people who are the Church').<sup>14</sup> This argumentation and rhetoric potentially devalues the importance of the institutional church. And Erasmus is explicit and outspoken in his denial of the

<sup>9</sup> The most important of these are *Aut regem aut fatuum nasci oportere* (*One Ought to be Born a King or a Fool*) (I. iii. 1); *A mortuo tributum exigere* (*To Exact Tribute from the Dead*) (I. ix. 12); *Spartam nactus es, hanc orna* (*Sparta is your Portion; Do your Best for Her*) (II. v. 1); *Sileni Alcibiadis* (*The Sileni of Alcibiades*) (III. iii. 1); *Scarabaeus aquilam quaerit* (*A Dung-Beetle Hunting an Eagle*) (III. vii. 1); and *Dulce bellum inexpertis* (*War is a Treat for Those Who Have not Tried It*) (IV. i. 1).

<sup>10</sup> Erasmus, *Sileni Alcibiadis*, ASD II-5, pp. 159–90; CWE 34, 262–82.

<sup>11</sup> The three thinkers mentioned elaborated of course the ideology of secular authority. The ideologists of the Church, notably James of Viterbo and Giles of Rome, are less known. Whether it is because of their intrinsic inferiority compared to their rivals or because the church eventually lost the battle is another question.

<sup>12</sup> Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, II, 124.

<sup>13</sup> Besides *Sileni Alcibiadis* Erasmus's ecclesiology is clearly formulated in the less polemical 'Letter to Paul Volz', Allen III, Ep. 858, trans. by R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson in CWE 66, 8–23. The letter became the preface to Erasmus's *Enchiridion*. See also McConica, 'Erasmus and the Grammar of Consent'; Augustijn, 'The Ecclesiology of Erasmus'.

<sup>14</sup> ASD II-5, p. 174, ll. 292, 294; CWE 34, 271.

Church's claims for temporal authority, indeed for any coercive power. This is the central contention of the adage, and Erasmus employs many arguments in order to substantiate it. His basic argument is simple: the religious and the worldly are incompatible spheres, and therefore spiritual authority is incompatible with temporal power. Priests ought therefore to be heavenly rulers in the heavenly commonwealth while shunning earthly rule.<sup>15</sup> In order to make his point Erasmus employs the analogy between Christ and the church — the church as it should be. Christ could have been king of the world if he had so chosen. But he decided to renounce temporal power, riches and pleasures. This the church ought to do as well: 'Christus palam negavit regnum suum huius esse mundi, et tu convenire putas, ut Christi successor mundanam ditionem non solum admittat, verum etiam ambiat, proque hac omnem, quod aiunt, moveat lapidem?' ('Christ openly denied that His kingdom was of this world, and can you think it proper for Christ's successor not merely to accept an earthly rule but even to seek it as desirable, and in order to secure it to leave, as they say, no stone unturned?').<sup>16</sup> The immersion of the church in worldly affairs is the root of its corruption, which Erasmus denounces in no uncertain terms. When churchmen behave like Eastern potentates and 'array themselves in purple and silk', it is little wonder that Christendom has sunk to such a low point.<sup>17</sup>

Erasmus's views are therefore reminiscent of the fourteenth-century ideological enemies of the church. There are however significant differences between Erasmus on the one hand and Dante, Ockham, and Marsiglio on the other. For the present discussion the important difference concerns the sources of the authority of the intellectual as political thinker, or more generally, the social position of the intellectual. The fourteenth-century thinkers opposing the Church allied themselves with secular authority, specifically with the Emperors, who struggled against the popes. Their rejection of the temporal authority of the church was conceptually related to the legitimation of secular authority. And indeed, they elaborated systematic and coherent political philosophies at the heart of which lay a positive evaluation of secular political authority.<sup>18</sup> Erasmus's position was very different. He criticized the church as an autonomous intellectual. His writ-

<sup>15</sup> *ASD* II-5, p. 178, ll. 395–96; *CWE* 34, 274.

<sup>16</sup> *ASD* II-5, p. 182, ll. 458–61; *CWE* 34, 276.

<sup>17</sup> *ASD* II-5, p. 174, ll. 314–16; *CWE* 34, 271.

<sup>18</sup> See Dante, *Monarchy*, ed. and trans. by Shaw; Marsilio da Padova, *The Defender of Peace*, trans. by Gewirth; William of Ockham, *A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government*, ed. by McGrade.



ings did not represent the ideology or the interests of any political establishment. Specifically, his rejection of the Church's claims for temporal authority was not elaborated from the perspective of secular authority. On the contrary, Erasmus's political writings — including those predominantly concerned with the church — are also highly critical towards secular authority. Time and again the *Sileni Alcibiadis* condemns contemporary secular political culture: the princes who are in fact despots, enemies of their people and violators of peace and morality, and their friends and councillors, who corrupt them with misguided education, delude them with adulation, and involve them in wars and civil discord.<sup>19</sup>

Erasmus's negative view of contemporary kings and of kingship generally and in fact his complete alienation from secular authority are best exemplified in two other adages of the utopian edition, *Scarabaeus aquilam quaerit* and *Aut regem aut fatuum nasci oportere*, dedicated to kings and kingship.<sup>20</sup> The eagle, the negative protagonist of the *Scarabaeus*, Erasmus emphasizes, is a traditional regal symbol.<sup>21</sup> Around this analogy between eagles and kings Erasmus weaves his story, which does not leave any doubts about his mind-set concerning kings. Kings — all kings except perhaps one or two throughout history — are ignorant of all that is good and godly, and their behaviour reflects their character and beliefs.<sup>22</sup> When they are not occupied in dicing, drinking, hunting, and whoring, they devote themselves to the truly regal business of using any means for robbing the wealth of their subjects.<sup>23</sup>

Erasmus's political views are therefore independent and critical of both secular and ecclesiastical authorities. As if to stress the point the *Scarabaeus* and the *Sileni Alcibiadis* were published together in 1517 by Froben in a separate edition.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> ASD II-5, pp. 168–74, ll. 183–291; CWE 34, 267–70. In the Letter to Volz Erasmus stresses in almost Augustinian fashion that the realm of politics is a necessary evil, devoid of any inherent moral, let alone religious, value. Princes and lay magistrates, he says, 'handle a certain amount of worldly business that has no part at all in Christian purity; and yet this must not be criticized, because it is necessary for the conservation of society' (CWE 66, 15).

<sup>20</sup> ASD II-6, pp. 395–424, trans. by Denis L. Drysdall in CWE 35, 178–214; ASD II-1, pp. 303–14, trans. by Margaret Mann Phillips in CWE 31, 227–36.

<sup>21</sup> ASD II-6, pp. 398–99, ll. 41–90; CWE 35, 182. Tracy, *The Politics of Erasmus*, pp. 37–39, notes that the eagle was also the distinct symbol of Empire and concludes that the *Scarabaeus* was an expression of Erasmus's animosity towards Emperor Maximilian. This may be true, but it should not obscure the fact that the main target of the adage is kingship generally.

<sup>22</sup> ASD II-6, p. 400, ll. 106–11; CWE 35, 184.

<sup>23</sup> ASD II-6, p. 402, ll. 126–43; CWE 35, 185.

<sup>24</sup> See Phillips, *The 'Adages' of Erasmus*, p. 229, n. 3.

Nor does Erasmus speak on behalf of or represent the interests of any distinct social class. On the contrary, he severely criticizes practically all social groups. Most significant is his aversion towards court culture and of the aristocratic ethos, that is, the ideological basis of the contemporary social and political order. Indeed Erasmus's distaste for kingship was informed by his hostility towards the aristocratic values and way of life. This attitude can be clearly discerned in any of the political adages. In this spirit Erasmus strongly condemns both in the *Sileni Alcibiadis* and the *Scarabaeus* the favourite symbols of aristocracy like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar.<sup>25</sup> In the *Sileni* he ridicules the notion of blood nobility: 'Illustis est, cujus tritavus in bello strenuum praestitit homicidam: et plebeius est, atque imaginibus caret, qui bonis animi profuit orbi?' ('A man is noble if his great-great-great-great-grandfather proved himself on the field of battle a doughty murderer; and is a plebeian without pride of ancestry who by intellectual gifts has been blessing to the world?').<sup>26</sup> In *Aut regem* this attitude is even more pronounced and Erasmus's language much more virulent. Here Erasmus explicitly attributes the negative character and conduct of contemporary kings to their upbringing in aristocratic culture in accordance with courtly values. With his companions, an 'effeminate crew', the future king is absorbed, Erasmus argues, in 'gaming, dancing, feasting, lute-playing, gadding about'. The literature the young prince imbibes with his noble friends is not more promising: 'he reads old wives' tales, or what is worse, historical romances'. No mind, not even 'the mentality of an Aristides', Erasmus exclaims, can withstand the corruptive influence of such upbringing.<sup>27</sup> Erasmus's total estrangement from, indeed incomprehension of, the aristocratic ethos is perhaps most clearly indicated by his stance towards the *Iliad*, a work belonging to the humanist canon. The Homeric epic, the celebrated expression of heroic values, was looked at by Erasmus with utter contempt. Agreeing with Horace that the *Iliad* has nothing but 'the passions of foolish kings and foolish peoples', Erasmus portrays the actions of the epic's protagonists as idiotic, cruel, childish, barbarous, senile, shameless, and so forth.<sup>28</sup>

The denunciation of the notion of blood nobility was of course a common humanist attitude. Erasmus inherited it from his Italian humanists (though his portrayal of aristocracy is much more concrete and his denunciation of it much

<sup>25</sup> For example *ASD* II-6, p. 406, ll. 264–70, *ASD* II-5, p. 182, ll. 455–57; *CWE* 35, 191 and 34, 276.

<sup>26</sup> *ASD* II-5, p. 170, ll. 235–37; *CWE* 34, 269.

<sup>27</sup> *ASD* II-1, pp. 312–14, ll. 215–50; *CWE* 31, 234–35.

<sup>28</sup> *ASD* II-1, p. 304, ll. 22–34; *CWE* 31, 228.

more intense than that of most of his predecessors). The Italian humanists of the *quattrocento* were never tired of explaining that *vera nobilitas* did not depend on lineage or wealth but solely on the individual's virtue, character, and personality.<sup>29</sup> The social and cultural context was, however, different. In many Italian polities of the *quattrocento* there was no blood nobility, and consequently the hegemonic political ideology was not aristocratic. Denunciations of the aristocratic ethos by the Italian humanists actually served the interests and ideology of the ruling classes in many Italian states — and in this respect there is no difference between republics and city-states ruled by 'new' princes devoid of dynastic legitimacy — and corresponded to dominant ideas. Erasmus, in contrast, lived in northern Europe where monarchical and aristocratic political ideology and cultural values were dominant. Against this background his condemnation of the aristocratic ethos and ideology acquires its full meaning, indicating the autonomy of Erasmian humanism.

Nor was Erasmus's antagonism towards the upper classes — and his explicit preference of elected monarchy over a dynastic one<sup>30</sup> — a manifestation of a populist sentiment. On the contrary, Erasmus's writings attest to his fear and contempt, sometimes qualified by paternalistic compassion, towards the common people. The *Sileni Alcibiadis* for instance is dotted with numerous pejorative references to the 'crassum vulgus' ('the stupid multitude'), the plebeians who lack moral judgment and sound reason.<sup>31</sup> In the *Scarabaeus* this attitude is even more evident. The logic of the legend Erasmus relates — the deadly struggle between the eagle and the dung-beetle, that is between cruel and arbitrary powerful person and a weak but morally superior and resilient one — naturally leads to a sympathetic stance towards those located at the opposite end to kings in the social spectrum, namely the common people. But in the concluding remarks of the adage Erasmus turns the lesson of the story on its head, condemning inferior and mean 'homunculi', who make trouble for great men.<sup>32</sup> Distancing himself from the common people Erasmus suddenly transforms the rapacious and oppressing tyrants he has so vividly described throughout his narrative into 'great men'.

<sup>29</sup> The paradigmatic work in the genre of *vera nobilitas* is Poggio Bracciolini's work. The Latin (with an Italian translation) is reproduced in Bracciolini, *La vera nobiltà*, ed. by Canfora. For English translation see Bracciolini, *On Nobility*, ed. by Rabil. See also Rabil's Introduction.

<sup>30</sup> *ASD* II-1, p. 310, ll. 160–66; *CWE* 31, 232.

<sup>31</sup> For example *ASD* II-5, p. 168, ll. 184–87; p. 170, ll. 229–31; p. 182, ll. 436–37; pp. 182, ll. 469–70; p. 188, ll. 584–89; *CWE* 34, 267, 269, 275, 276, 280.

<sup>32</sup> *ASD* II-6, p. 424, ll. 810–14; *CWE* 35, 214.

Nor, finally, can Erasmus be seen as representing the interests of a putative bourgeoisie. His deep suspicion and alienation from mercantile and financial activities is clearly revealed in another utopian adage, *A mortuo tributum exigere*.<sup>33</sup> The proverb, which refers to obtaining money by foul means or by exploiting the weak, provides Erasmus with yet another platform to condemn the rapacious and oppressive behaviour of both secular rulers and the church.<sup>34</sup> Here however princes and prelates are coupled with the mercantile class: the usurers who enjoyed high esteem though their activity was rejected by pagan philosophy and Christian religion alike, as well as 'sordidum hoc negociatorum genus, qui technis, mendaciis, imposturis, fucis, undecunque venantur lucellum' ('this sordid class of merchants, who use tricks and falsehoods, fraud and misrepresentation in pursuit of profit from any source').<sup>35</sup>

Erasmus stands alone, independent of and critical towards any distinct social group and political establishment. He is in fact strongly alienated from his society, that is, Christendom as a whole. This is perhaps most conspicuous in the *Sileni Alcibiadis*, where Erasmus interprets the gap between appearance and reality, which the adage highlights, as a gap between Christendom as it is and as it should be. Contemporary society, he claims, inverts the moral scale of values: 'Hinc aurum antepositum litteris, generis antiquitas honesto, corporis dotes animi bonis, caerimoniis posthabetur vera pietas, Christi praecepta decretis hominum, persona veritati, umbra rebus, fucata nativis, fluxa solidis, momentanea aeternis'. ('Thus gold is more valued than sound learning, ancient lineage more than integrity, bodily endowments more than intellectual gifts; true religion takes second place to ceremonies, Christ's commandments to the decrees of men, the mask to the true face; shadow is preferred to substance, artificial to natural, transient to solid, momentary to eternal'.)<sup>36</sup>

The author of the utopian adages is the universal intellectual, the head of the humanist Republic of Letters, who preaches to the powerful — including his own patrons — from a position of clear moral and intellectual superiority. As autonomous intellectual Erasmus criticizes accepted customs and institutions, and allows himself to reject the ideological foundations of the existing order, namely the aristocratic ethos. For him the city-state and the court ceased to be points of reference as they were for the other humanists. They were replaced by the not-yet-

<sup>33</sup> ASD II-2, pp. 330–35; CWE 32, 184–87.

<sup>34</sup> ASD II-2, pp. 332–34, ll. 189–230; CWE 32, 185–86.

<sup>35</sup> ASD II-2, p. 332, ll. 178–79; CWE 32, 184–85.

<sup>36</sup> ASD II-5, p. 172, ll. 250–53; CWE 34, 269.

existing fully civilized Christendom. As universal intellectual Erasmus conceived and offered his comprehensive reform programme as the product of sustained critical thinking, a disinterested intellectual pursuit detached from the interests and ideology of any distinct political establishment or social estate.<sup>37</sup>

The utopian adages also imply a distinct attitude towards the classical heritage. The *Adages* project as a whole acutely raises this question. The ever growing collection of annotated and explicated classical proverbs and sayings was certainly an expression of humanist admiration of the classical world and reliance on the classical heritage and was even defined as 'the chief monument' of Erasmus's classical scholarship.<sup>38</sup> The precise relationship of the *Adages* to the classical heritage — or rather what the humanists understood as the classical heritage — is however harder to pinpoint.<sup>39</sup> Erasmus's method was simple: in order to uncover the meaning of each proverb he traced its appearance throughout classical literature. This apparent submissiveness towards classical literature in fact radically fragmented not only the classical heritage as whole, but also each classical corpus, indeed any single work. Moreover, the reading of classical literature through a series of decontextualized proverbs, arbitrarily organized and interpreted in a heavily subjective and moralizing manner, located Erasmus in an authoritative position vis-à-vis tradition. The classical heritage became Erasmus's alibi. He could elaborate any idea and still present it as a classical one, or at least attach to it the prestige associated with classical civilization. Nowhere is this characteristic clearer than in the utopian adages. These adages express, as we saw, the distinctive — sometimes radical and almost always controversial — Erasmian cultural, social and political views. And precisely for this reason they push the classical heritage into the distant background. In this manner a hermetic classical saying concerning the gap between appearance and reality is transformed into a platform for the condemnation of the church, and a legend about the battle between the eagle and dung-beetle is easily turned against Europe's rulers. The author gains complete control of the classical building blocks, which he endows with meaning by his own associations and subordinates to his own aims.

<sup>37</sup> From this perspective More's *Utopia* is a distinct product of Erasmian humanism. See Yoran, 'More's *Utopia* and Erasmus's No Place', pp. 4–10.

<sup>38</sup> Tracy, *Erasmus: The Growth of a Mind*, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> For different attempts to account for this relationship see Kinney, 'Erasmus' *Adagia*: Midwife to the Rebirth of Learning'; Greene, 'Erasmus's "Festina Lente"'; Eden, *Friends Hold All Things in Common*.

In the *Sileni Alcibiadis* Erasmus highlighted with subtle irony his position vis-à-vis the classical heritage. Did I, a compiler of proverbs, become a preacher, he asks, and answers: 'It was Alcibiades with his Sileni who drew me into this position'. He immediately adds however that he would not regret this error if his digression can contribute to the amendment of life.<sup>40</sup> The Erasmian reform program enjoys clear priority over classical recovery. Contemporaries felt the same, and the adages that dealt with political and social issues became the most popular.<sup>41</sup> Commenting on the *Adages*, the Venetian ambassador to London, Sebastiano Giustiniani, explicitly compared Erasmus with the ancients. Confessing that as a rule he is 'reluctant to read modern authors', he makes an exception of Erasmus. The classical proverbs themselves are delightful and greatly contribute to learning and style, he says, but what Erasmus adds to them 'is far better still'. Indeed some of the adages — and Giustiniani mentions *Dulce bellum* and *Aut regem* — surpass the works of the classical authors.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Discontents of the Universal Intellectual*

The identity of the universal intellectual was therefore constructed by and sustained the discourse of Erasmian humanism. However this identity proved to be most problematical. In a sense this is generally true. The identity of the modern intellectual is notoriously riddled with uncertainties and ironies and his or her social position is ambiguous. The questions concerning the intellectual's self-understanding and claims for possessing knowledge and truth are as unsettled as ever.

I would like, however, to focus on a specific problem of the notion of the universal intellectual in Erasmian humanism. My claim is that this identity cannot be legitimized within humanist discourse itself. If my claim is valid there was an inherent tension at the heart of Erasmian humanism. As this tension was ultimately irresolvable, it was never dealt with in the writings of the Erasmian humanists. Indeed, it was disguised and repressed, and must be therefore uncovered. For doing this, the works of Erasmus must be seen as bearers of symptoms of the internal tensions they conceal. They must be read therefore against the grain of their explicit argumentation and rhetoric, and their logical and conceptual

<sup>40</sup> *ASD* II-5, p. 190, ll. 642–46; *CWE* 34, 281.

<sup>41</sup> Phillips, 'Ways with Adages', p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> Allen II, Ep. 591. 34–57; *CWE* 4, 393.

contradictions, their rhetorical excesses, and their omissions and silences must be exposed. In this manner I shall read another famous adage of the utopian edition, *Dulce bellum inexpertis*.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps even more than the other adages *Dulce bellum* underscores Erasmus's identity of the universal intellectual. Writing on the subject closest to his heart, Erasmus is clearly the educator of Christendom, and as such he is critical towards both its upper classes and its intellectual tradition.<sup>44</sup> Thus he flatly rejects the doctrine of 'just war' accepted by mainstream Christian thought after Augustine.<sup>45</sup> Without hesitation, he censures the theologians — referring to 'the church fathers' and mentioning Bernard and Aquinas by name — who propagated the doctrine as well as the Popes who accepted it.<sup>46</sup> Of even more significance are Erasmus's outright condemnation of the aristocratic culture as the general cause of violence and his specific accusations against Europe's contemporary princes. Erasmus's unambiguous rejection of the much-discussed Holy War against the Turks is an indication of his position. At the beginning of the sixteenth century there was wide ideological consensus in Europe about the need to fight the Ottoman Empire. In *Dulce bellum* Erasmus discards both the rhetoric of self-defence mobilized to justify the war, and the idea of converting the Turks by means of holy war.<sup>47</sup> He goes so far as to assert that most Turks are 'half-Christian' and perhaps nearer to true Christianity than nominal European Christians.<sup>48</sup> Unsurprisingly, the internal dynamics of Erasmus's discussion results in an unequivocal attack against those who wield power, secular as well as ecclesiastical: 'praetexti belli Turcici rumore, ut hoc titulo spoliatur populus Christianus, ut omnibus modis pressus fractusque servilius ferat principum utriusque generis tyrannidem' ('the rumour of war with the Turks has been put forward as an excuse for robbing the Christian population, so that it is broken with every sort of oppression and therefore is more servile to the tyranny of both

<sup>43</sup> ASD II-7, pp. 11–44; trans. by Denis L. Drysdall in *CWE* 35, 399–440.

<sup>44</sup> This is true to the other pacifist writings of Erasmus, among them yet another utopian adage, *Spartam nactus es, hanc orna*, ASD II-3, pp. 397–406; trans. by R.A.B. Mynors in *CWE* 33, 237–43, and the famous *Querela pacis* published in 1517, ASD IV-2, pp. 59–100; trans. by Betty Radice in *CWE* 27, 292–322.

<sup>45</sup> On the 'just war' doctrine during the Middle Ages, see Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>46</sup> ASD II-7, pp. 34–36, ll. 675–708; *CWE* 35, 426–27.

<sup>47</sup> ASD II-7, pp. 38–40, ll. 778–876; *CWE* 35, 431–34.

<sup>48</sup> ASD II-7, p. 40, ll. 841–44; *CWE* 35, 432–33.



sorts of princes').<sup>49</sup> The very implausibility of this conspiracy theory underscores the unique position of Erasmus.

At the basis of Erasmus's pacifism lay the conviction that human beings by their nature and Christians by their creed could and should live in state of undisturbed peace, where peace is taken also as the epitome of both the individual's ethical way of life and the moral and harmonious political order. But now a question arises: why in fact are men in general and Christians in particular so often engaged in wars? Answering this question, Erasmus argues in *Dulce bellum* that the descent into the existing state of 'extraordinary madness must have been a gradual process'.<sup>50</sup> And he indeed resorts to two stories of Fall: from a primordial Golden Age and from the state of primitive Christianity.

The first, taken in its general lines from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is a universal story concerning the decline of humanity as a whole.<sup>51</sup> Thus begins Erasmus's version of the story: 'Olim igitur, cum rudes illi priscique mortales, nudi, sine moenibus, absque tecto vitam in sylvis agerent, evenit aliquoties, ut a feris ac beluis offenderentur. Cum his igitur primum homini bellum susceptum est.' ('Long ago therefore when the first primitive men lived in the forests, naked, without fortifications or homes, they were sometimes attacked by savage beasts. It was with these that man first went to war').<sup>52</sup> This first bloodshed was the only one that was done solely for self-defence and was therefore the only justified one. It was however a first step onto a slope. Men soon started to hunt animals for their skins — 'the first murders' — and later for eating, an act that Erasmus compares to patricide, cannibalism and prostitution of virgins in religious rites.<sup>53</sup> Habituating himself to killing, man incited by anger began to attack his own species with fists, clubs and stones. However, for a long time this kind of barbarity was limited to fighting between individuals. But with the passage of time, people started to band together in groups of kin, neighbours and friends, and to conduct battles with rival groups. The scope and the sophistication of these battles increased with

<sup>49</sup> ASD II-7, p. 40, ll. 865–67; CWE 35, 434. See also Tracy, *The Politics of Erasmus*, pp. 113–15.

<sup>50</sup> ASD II-7, p. 18, ll. 195–98; CWE 35, 407.

<sup>51</sup> The origins of the myth of the Golden Age in western thought lie in the remote past. Its first literary formulation appears in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. It subsequently recurred in the works of several Greek and Latin authors, most influentially in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. See Lovejoy and Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*, pp. 23–53; Adams, *The Better Part of Valor*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>52</sup> ASD II-7, p. 18, ll. 198–201; CWE 35, 407.

<sup>53</sup> ASD II-7, pp. 18–19, ll. 200–14; CWE 35, 408.



time. Moreover, a cultural code that sanctioned values of virility and heroism, which in turn propagated war, came into being.<sup>54</sup> The scope of war became ever larger as cities and kingdoms began to make war with each other. Yet even at this stage some inhibitions, 'humanitatis pristinae vestigia' ('traces of the humanity of the earliest times'), still remained, and Erasmus cites some classical war customs.<sup>55</sup> The decline continued, however, as through constant war and bloodshed the great empires emerged, and 'imperia quoque ad sceleratissimos mortales devenissent' ('power had fallen into the hands of the most criminal sorts of mortals').<sup>56</sup> The situation continued to deteriorate until the madness has reached such a point that 'tota vita nihil aliud agatur' ('life consists of nothing else'). War of all against all prevails: race against race, people against people, brother against brother, and worst of all Christian against Christian. And still worse, no one is surprised at this; no one seems to care.<sup>57</sup>

The most striking feature of Erasmus's narrative is the strict correlation between the civilizing process and the intensification of violence and war. There was no war at the stage of primitive humanity. Man became a political animal when he began to war: 'vir fortis habebatur ac dux qui ferarum vim ab hominum genere depulisset' ('a man was considered brave and a leader if he had driven off attacking beasts from his fellow humans').<sup>58</sup> And from then on any development in social organization went hand in hand with escalation of war. In Erasmus's words: 'Atque ita paulatim una cum rerum cultu crescente malitia' ('malice grew gradually side by side with civilization').<sup>59</sup>

The inversion of the usual Erasmian notions and values could not be more radical. The narrative undermines the humanist, and particularly the Erasmian, conception of human nature. Erasmus, who taught that the very *humanitas* of humans is a product of culture, who declared in *De pueris instituendis* that 'prisci mortales qui nullis legibus, nullis disciplinis, vago concubitu vitam agebant in nemoribus, ferae verius erant quam homines' ('primitive man, living a lawless, unschooled, promiscuous life in the woods, was not human, but rather a wild

<sup>54</sup> ASD II-7, p. 20, ll. 241–52; CWE 35, 409.

<sup>55</sup> ASD II-7, p. 20, ll. 252–57; CWE 35, 410.

<sup>56</sup> ASD II-7, p. 20, ll. 261–66; CWE 35, 410.

<sup>57</sup> ASD II-7, p. 21, ll. 274–81; CWE 35, 411.

<sup>58</sup> ASD II-7, p. 18, ll. 201–02; CWE 35, 407–08.

<sup>59</sup> ASD II-7, p. 20, ll. 250–51; CWE 35, 409–10. Many editions, including *LB*, mistakenly printed *militia* instead of the correct *malitia*. CWE 35, 409, n. 39.

animal’),<sup>60</sup> now sees primitive man as the apex of humanity. But unsurprisingly, he cannot say anything positive about primitive men and women besides their peaceful nature. Here the contrast between his Golden Age and that of the classical tradition is most significant. In contrast to the classical writers, Erasmus does not dwell on the bliss of life in nature without the shackles of civilization. For Ovid, the Golden Age was a time of eternal spring, of ‘rivers of milk and rivers of nectar’, of supernatural abundance mirrored in a state moral perfection, in which ‘faith and righteousness were cherished by men of their own free will’.<sup>61</sup> For Erasmus, the only thing that can be said about primitive existence is that ‘rudes illi priscique mortales, nudi, sine moenibus, absque tecto vitam in sylvis agent’ (‘the first primitive men lived in the forests, naked, without fortifications or homes’), and even this description appears in a subordinated clause of a sentence that actually relates the negative aspect of this way of life — the attacks of the savage beasts — which led in turn to civilization.<sup>62</sup> Primitivism simply cannot be defended in Erasmian discourse. The narrative of fall in *Dulce bellum* also undermines Erasmus’s reform programme. For while Erasmian reform was based on the notion of a process of personal as well as social melioration, in the adage the process of civilization is a story of unqualified linear fall in which Erasmus’s own time is depicted as the worst period.

Erasmus returns to the issue of war and civilization later in the adage, long after he finishes relating the myth, and again his discussion entangles him in contradictions. The occasion is a comparison between the ancient kings and heroes and the Christian ones. In line with the overall pessimistic mood of *Dulce bellum*, Erasmus argues that the former were much better than the latter. Not that Erasmus was fond of Alexander the Great, Xerxes, and their like. On the contrary, he dubs them ‘raving bandits’.<sup>63</sup> The only ambition of these pagan monarchs, he says, was achieving glory. But he hastens to add that, in contrast to the Christian princes,

Gaudebant florentiores reddere provincias, quas bello subegissent: populos agrestes, sine literis, sine legibus ritu ferarum viventes civilibus artibus expoliebant; regiones incultas extructis oppidis reddebant celebres; parum tuta communiebant; pontibus, littoribus, aggeribus milleque id genus commoditatibus vitam hominum adiuvabant, ut tum expedierit devinci.

<sup>60</sup> ASD I-2, p. 31, ll. 22–23; trans. by Beert C. Verstraete in *CWE* 26, 304.

<sup>61</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I. 89–112, cited in Lovejoy and Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>62</sup> ASD II-7, p. 18, ll. 198–99; *CWE* 35, 407.

<sup>63</sup> ASD II-7, p. 30, l. 554; *CWE* 35, 421.

(They took pleasure in increasing the prosperity of the provinces they had subjugated in war; where rustic peoples were without education or law and living like wild beasts, they brought refinement and the arts of civilization; they populated uncultivated regions by building towns; they fortified unsafe places, and made men's lives easier by building bridges, wharves, embankments, and a thousand other such amenities, so that it turned out beneficial to be conquered.)<sup>64</sup>

Once again Erasmus associates war and civilization and the result is ambiguous to its core. By now the Golden Age of primitive humanity is altogether dropped. Instead the usual humanist perspective is taken: before the 'arts of civilization' were introduced people were simply barbarous, indeed similar to wild animals. But then civilization is inherently linked to war. The evaluation of civilization is therefore inherently equivocal: it brought about material advantages and prosperity as well as social and intellectual advancement. And yet all these advantages are causally attributed to war: It was necessary to be subdued by war and conquered — by raving bandits, whose only ambition was glory — in order to enjoy civilization. Civilization turns out to be the source of both good and evil. Human history becomes a process of melioration as well as degradation. Again *Dulce Bellum* subverts the basic Erasmian anthropological and cultural assumptions, and undermines the assumption of the Erasmian reform program.

Similar paradoxes surface in Erasmus's second story of Fall, which meant to answer a narrower question than the first, namely why Christians make war. Again Erasmus argues that war could have become acceptable only by a gradual process of decline. His views concerning the causes of this process are, however, quite surprising. For Erasmus puts the blame on nothing else but learning. The first Christians, he argues, dispensed with learning altogether. Whatever secular knowledge they acquired before becoming Christians they put to 'pious uses'. Learning and eloquence were introduced into Christianity on the pretext of combating heresy, but immediately brought about lust for controversy.<sup>65</sup> With the passing of time learning led to the replacement of Christian values by contrary pagan ideals, to the point that, by Erasmus's time, the greater part of life-time passes before one is free to investigate the sacred scriptures. And by then 'tot tamen opinionibus mundanis infectus accedas oportet, ut Christi iam decreta aut prorsus offendant aut ad illorum dogmata torqueantur' ([one is] 'inevitably

<sup>64</sup> ASD II-7, p. 32, ll. 592–96; CWE 35, 423.

<sup>65</sup> ASD II-7, p. 28, ll. 498–501; CWE 35, 419.

so corrupted with all these worldly ideas that the precepts of Christ either seem utterly repugnant or they are distorted to fit the teachings of the pagans').<sup>66</sup>

Together with the undermining of learning, *Dulce bellum* challenges also the humanist distinction between good and bad learning. Unsurprisingly, Erasmus uses his censure of learning for staging yet another assault on scholasticism, condemning Aristotle and the Roman law: the former taught Christians that human happiness depends on bodily comforts and worldly goods and that a polity in which all property is held in common cannot flourish, while the latter taught them to meet force with force and justified war and usury.<sup>67</sup> But they are not the only ones to be blamed for the perversion of the authentic Christian teaching. The teaching of Christ, Erasmus states, is contaminated by the writings of pagan dialecticians, sophists, mathematicians, orators, poets, philosophers, and lawyers.<sup>68</sup> The distinction between scholastic quibbles and the *bonae litterae*, which the humanists, and Erasmus above all, toiled to establish in numerous works written over more than a century and a half, vanishes in one stroke. Orators, poets and philosophers are now joined with dialecticians and sophists as the enemies of Christianity. Humanism is thus implicitly put on the same plane as scholasticism.

*Dulce bellum* thus undermines the fundamental convictions of Erasmian humanism: first, the importance of learning, and secondly the compatibility between secular learning and Christianity, between *eruditio* and *pietas*. The adage is read almost as a parody on numerous works of Erasmus, which celebrated both the intrinsic value of classical literature and its compatibility with faith. *Antibarbarorum liber*, to take one example, offers narrative diametrically opposed to that of *Dulce bellum*. It depicts the decline of classical learning as a calamity to humankind and the divorce of Christianity from secular learning as the principal cause of the deterioration of Christendom.<sup>69</sup> In fact, apart from the sections about the origins of war, *Dulce bellum* itself propagates the same ideas, endowing learning with positive values. It unequivocally states that 'liberalium disciplinarum studium et cognitionis ardorem' ('the pursuit of learning and the desire for knowledge') 'potissimum abducit hominis ingenium ab omni feritate' ('are the most effective means of drawing the mind of man away from savagery').<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> ASD II-7, p. 29, ll. 518–19; CWE 35, 420.

<sup>67</sup> ASD II-7, pp. 28–29, ll. 501–13; CWE 35, 419–20.

<sup>68</sup> ASD II-7, p. 29, ll. 514–19; CWE 35, 420.

<sup>69</sup> ASD I-1, pp. 35–138; trans. by Margaret Mann Phillips in CWE 23, 1–122. See also Bejczy, *Erasmus and the Middle Ages*, pp. 8–12; Bradshaw, 'The Christian Humanism of Erasmus'.

<sup>70</sup> ASD II-7, p. 14, ll. 78–79; CWE 35, 402.

*Dulce bellum* ultimately subverts therefore the key notions of Erasmian humanism, namely learning, the *studia humanitatis*, liberal education and civilization. It unwittingly highlights the weaknesses, ambiguities and fragility of Erasmian discourse and undermines the foundation of the Erasmian reform programme.

How are we to account for this phenomenon? It might have been supposed that in the field of political thought the external political and ideological pressures on the writer are strongest, and so are the distortions that these pressures bring about. But this is evidently not the case with Erasmus's political writings. On the contrary, we have seen that the utopian adages were resistant to such pressures and that Erasmus's independence vis-à-vis the powerful is most evident in *Dulce bellum*. This insight highlights the peculiarity of Erasmus's political writings: Erasmus could sternly criticize the secular and ecclesiastical political establishments and condemn the aristocratic ethos, but he could not sustain the basic humanist and Erasmian notions. The inevitable conclusion is that the strains in *Dulce bellum* are not effects of external pressures, but rather symptoms of an internal problem of Erasmian humanism that was brought to the fore by the political discussion.

My contention is that the problem inheres in Erasmus's independence, or more precisely, in the identity of the universal intellectual. For this identity infringed the basic ethical and epistemological presuppositions of humanist discourse itself. We saw that humanist discourse perceived human reality as inherently symbolic and knowledge as a set of procedures for the production and disclosure of meanings. Knowledge was thus epistemologically and ethically embedded in social reality: it was knowledge of meaningful human artefacts. It was also inherently practical as it was meant to inform public activity. Against this background we can understand the notion of the intellectual implied by humanist discourse. The producer and transmitter of knowledge was not the scholastic philosopher who dwells in a contemplative sphere and obtains — or believes he does — an objective and logically valid truth about the objective universal order of things. The intellectual was the *litteratus*, 'cuius officium per omnes litterarum species, hoc est, per omnes sese disciplinas effundit' ('whose area of study extends across every variety of literature, that is, every discipline'), in the words Thomas More employed for describing Erasmus in his letter to Martin van Dorp, the most forceful attempt to provide theoretical grounding to Erasmian humanism.<sup>71</sup> The *litteratus* was thus the inheritor of the great cultural heritage of humanity. And according to More, Erasmus contributed to the advancement of both sacred

<sup>71</sup> 'Letter to Martin Dorp', in *CW*, xv, p. 12, ll. 20–21.

and secular sound learning more than anyone else in the last centuries.<sup>72</sup> At the same time the *litteratus* does not pursue learning for its own sake. Immersed in concrete social reality the humanist man of letters procures knowledge as a means for the cultural and social melioration of Christendom. And indeed, like the sun, Erasmus spreads his bounty all over the world.<sup>73</sup> He is the one whom ‘nullis [...] rerum damnis, nullis corpusculi vel morbis vel periculis, potuit a bonis vnquam studiis et toti terrarum profuturis orbi reuellere’ (‘no material expense and no physical illness or danger could tear from the virtuous labours which he was performing for the good of the entire world’).<sup>74</sup>

From this perspective we can understand the problem of the identity of the universal intellectual. The autonomy of the Erasmian humanist detached him from concrete social reality, violating the humanist commitment to the *vita activa*. The citizenship of the Republic of Letters cut off Erasmus from the actual social and political forces that could have brought about social change. More importantly, this detachment was ultimately an epistemological problem for Erasmian humanism. For it meant that the intellectual activity of the Erasmian humanist was conducted and his knowledge was produced in a disembodied intellectual sphere. But this sphere, this privileged point outside social reality, was not, under the premises of humanist discourse, a location for the production of knowledge. The Erasmian Republic of Letters, in other words, existed in a literally utopian location, in a humanist No-place. For this reason the central notions of Erasmian humanism — learning, liberal education, civilization, reform — could not ultimately be accounted for in humanist terms from the vantage point of the Republic of Letters.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Letter to Edward Lee’, in *CW*, xv, p. 160, ll. 2–5.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Letter to a Monk’, in *CW*, xv, p. 298, ll. 13–16.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Letter to Edward Lee’, in *CW*, xv, p. 166, ll. 1–3.

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## ENJEUX DE LA TRADUCTION DU GREC EN LATIN DANS LA *RESPUBLICA LITTERARIA* AUTOUR D'ÉRASME

Isabelle Diu

La question de la traduction, souvent évoquée en passant lorsque l'on se penche sur la transmission des textes au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, nous semble pourtant au cœur des problématiques de la République des lettres humaniste: la *renovatio litterarum*, cette renaissance des lettres qui s'appuie notamment sur la redécouverte des textes antiques passe nécessairement par la traduction de l'héritage grec en latin.

La traduction apparaît donc comme une activité à laquelle s'adonnent les plus grands érudits, qu'il s'agisse de Guillaume Budé, Germain de Brie ou encore Oecolampade, pour ne pas entreprendre de les citer tous.<sup>1</sup> Quant à Érasme lui-même, il a donné à la traduction une place importante: outre sa traduction du *Novum Instrumentum*, œuvre monumentale qui l'a consacré aux yeux de la postérité, mais à laquelle nous ne nous intéresserons pas ici, car elle mériterait à elle seule un traitement singulier,<sup>2</sup> il a traduit nombre d'œuvres classiques et surtout patristiques, qu'il a toujours revendiquées, ne les séparant pas de ses autres œuvres.<sup>3</sup> Si l'on peut estimer concrètement le poids des œuvres traduites

<sup>1</sup> On en trouvera la liste dressée minutieusement sous forme de dictionnaire dans Maillard, Kecskeméti, et Portalier, *L'Europe des humanistes*.

<sup>2</sup> Au reste, le récent ouvrage de Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance*, qui aborde aussi la question de la traduction érasmienne, centre précisément ses analyses sur le Nouveau Testament, à partir des *Annotationes*: cf. 'Erasmus and the New Testament', chap. 3, pp. 115–63.

<sup>3</sup> Comme en témoigne la lettre à Botzheim où, dressant le catalogue de ses œuvres à la demande de son correspondant, il rassemble dans la même section 'quae faciunt ad morum

et mesurer l'importance quantitative de l'acte de traduction dans le monde humaniste,<sup>4</sup> il nous reste à analyser les raisons de cette prééminence, autrement dit à nous interroger sur les enjeux de la traduction dans la *Respublica litteraria*. Il nous semble que ces enjeux, s'ils sont d'abord pratiques (il s'agit de transmettre les textes, notamment antiques, fondateurs de cette République des lettres, ceux auxquels la communauté lettrée se réfère pour mieux se rassembler), sont plus fondamentalement d'ordre théorique : il convient de poser des principes qui régissent non seulement la traduction mais, au-delà, le langage et la langue elle-même, ce latin humaniste, conscience linguistique de la République littéraire. Nous voudrions notamment examiner si les règles de traduction que se donnent les humanistes répondent aux principes prévalant dans la sphère linguistique — principes qui devraient régir les relations des membres de la *Respublica litteraria* dans un monde qui voit l'émergence d'une culture nouvelle à dominante oratoire, prenant le pas sur la culture philosophico-théologique, spéculative et contemplative de l'époque médiévale.<sup>5</sup>

Pour étudier, sous cet angle, la théorie de la traduction érasmienne, nous nous pencherons sur un corpus composé essentiellement d'épîtres où cette question est évoquée, qu'elles soient tirées des lettres-préfaces aux traductions établies par Érasme lui-même, comme de missives échangées avec collaborateurs et correspondants ; à ces considérations, où la théorie est issue de la pratique, viendront s'ajouter les analyses de quelques passages extraits de textes majeurs pour la théorie de la langue et du langage, comme la *Lingua*, l'*Ecclesiastes* ou la *Copia*.<sup>6</sup>

institutionem' œuvres morales de son cru et traductions de Plutarque par exemple, ou encore sous la rubrique 'quae spectant ad institutionem literarum', ses propres traités rhétoriques et ses traductions de classiques grecs comme Euripide, Lucien, Libanios. Cf. Allen XII, pp. 30–34. La traduction française est celle de l'édition Erasmus, *Correspondance*, éd. par Gerlo, revue par mes soins. Le *Catalogue à Botzheim* figure dans Allen I, pp. 1–46.

<sup>4</sup> Pour Érasme, douze auteurs classiques et cinq Pères orientaux. Cf. Maillard, Kecskeméti, et Portalier, *L'Europe des humanistes*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gilson, *Les Idées et les lettres*; Gilson, 'Le Message de l'humanisme'.

<sup>6</sup> L'édition de référence est celle des œuvres complètes en cours de publication à Amsterdam, ASD.

## I. La question de la traduction

### 1. Les modèles antiques

Nécessairement, toute réflexion sur la traduction et même toute pratique s'inscrit dans un contexte de référence, plus ou moins explicite, aux autorités païennes et chrétiennes du monde antique et aux principes qu'elles ont formulés. Théorie et pratique de la traduction ont pour phares Platon et Aristote, puis Cicéron et Jérôme, lus à travers le double filtre de la religion, la *christianitas*, qui a dès longtemps interprété et assimilé la philosophie aristotélicienne, et de l'histoire, qui introduit inéluctablement une lecture biaisée, stratifiée par des siècles d'exégèse médiévale, de ces autorités.<sup>7</sup>

Si les conditions de possibilité de la traduction se fondent sans doute sur la réflexion sur le langage que véhicule la tradition grecque, notamment par le biais d'Aristote qui, en donnant à la rhétorique son propre champ d'action, celui des questions humaines, la sépare nettement de celui de la vérité scientifique ou des choses divines, pour la tourner tout entière vers la recherche du vraisemblable et faire fonds sur le langage,<sup>8</sup> ce sont les Romains qui se montrent les garants d'une pratique de la traduction littéraire que précisément ils inaugurent.

Les textes consacrés à la traduction par les écrivains de la Rome antique sont peu nombreux, aussi les autorités citées par les traducteurs médiévaux puis humanistes sont-elles toujours les mêmes: essentiellement Cicéron, d'abord, qui évoque les problèmes de la traduction dans ses traités de rhétorique, le *De Oratore* (livre 1) et le *De Optimo genere oratorum*, ainsi que dans le *De Finibus*, puis saint Jérôme, dans la lettre 57 à Pammachius. Ces textes sont bien connus des humanistes: le corpus cicéronien rassemblé par Pétrarque avant sa mort en 1374 comprend la plupart des traités rhétoriques; il est complété par la découverte, en 1392, à l'initiative de Coluccio Salutati, des lettres familières, à la bibliothèque capitulaire de Verceil, puis, au début du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, de discours comme le *Pro Murena*, exhumé par Poggio Bracciolini à Cluny, enfin par la remise au jour du *De Oratore* et de l'*Orator* en 1421 à la cathédrale de Lodi.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> L'ouvrage le plus complet et le plus récent traitant de la théorie de la traduction à la Renaissance est celui de Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Rhétorique*, I, 2, 1355 A–B. Sur Aristote et la rhétorique, cf. Reboul, *La Rhétorique*, p. 31; Michel, 'La Rhétorique, sa vocation, ses problèmes'.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Reynolds et Wilson, *D'Homère à Érasme*, pp. 89–93.

Le *De Finibus* 1. 2. 6 présente une justification de la traduction en récusant a priori toute hiérarchie entre les langues, ce qui exclut tout débat sur la problématique de la traduction comme trahison. Cicéron, soucieux d'exposer l'essentiel de la philosophie grecque aux Latins, pare à d'éventuelles objections: les ouvrages écrits en latin ne sont pas inférieurs à ceux des Grecs lorsqu'ils en présentent une belle version. Une bonne traduction permet de s'appropriier le fonds grec en conservant les écrits des Anciens (*[tueri] ea quæ dicta sunt ab iis quos probamus*). Mais cette conservation de la parole des autres est rendue impossible par l'emploi du mot à mot. C'est là le principe le plus important professé par Cicéron dans le *De Optimo genere oratorum*:

non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere.

Je n'ai pas jugé nécessaire de les rendre mot pour mot.<sup>10</sup>

Pourtant, il ne faut pas non plus tomber dans l'excès inverse. Il faut suivre son modèle autant que faire se peut; on en conservera les termes mêmes dans la mesure du possible, tant qu'ils ne contreviennent pas à l'usage latin (*mos, consuetudo*).<sup>11</sup> Les deux termes de *mos* et *consuetudo* véhiculent la notion de 'génie de la langue', ensemble de caractères particuliers, définis par l'usage, qui sont la marque d'une langue singulière. En respectant ce génie de la langue, on peut néanmoins rendre la *force* et le *poids* d'un discours autre (que désignent les termes de *vis, pondus*, ou le verbe *appendere*),<sup>12</sup> notions sur lesquelles se fonde Cicéron pour développer le caractère essentiellement rhétorique de la traduction.

Les principes cicéroniens sont repris avec force par saint Jérôme, mais réinterprétés à l'aune d'une nouvelle problématique rendue possible par la réflexion de Quintilien qui fait succéder à la théorie de l'imitation cicéronienne l'autorité de la paraphrase, tirant la traduction vers l'interprétation : cette problématique est celle de la lettre et du sens. Jérôme rappelle que ses adversaires lui reprochent *verbum non expressisse de verbo*. Ils ont tort, car, selon lui, le mot à mot est absurde.<sup>13</sup> En suivant la lettre, précise Jérôme, on ne satisfait pas à ses obligations de traducteur, contrairement aux apparences.<sup>14</sup> Mais, alors que Cicéron insistait sur

<sup>10</sup> Cicéron, *De Optimo genere oratorum*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Cicéron, *De Optimo genere oratorum*, 23, 'verba persequens eatenus, ut ea non abhorreant a more nostro', et 14, 'verbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis'.

<sup>12</sup> Cicéron, *De Optimo genere oratorum*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Jérôme, *Epistulae*, Ep. 57, 2 et Ep. 57, 5: 'si ad verbum interpretor, absurde resonant'.

<sup>14</sup> Jérôme, *Epistulae*, Ep. 57, 5.

l'impossibilité du mot à mot au nom du génie de la langue et de l'essence esthétique de la traduction, saint Jérôme récuse le littéralisme surtout en raison d'une hiérarchie entre les langues qui donne à toute traduction un relent de trahison.<sup>15</sup> Pour Jérôme, il s'agit avant tout de conserver le sens d'un texte, quitte à changer la forme du discours: au principe cicéronien *non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, nec converti ut interpretes, sed ut orator* vient se superposer la profession de foi hiéronymienne:

Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Græcorum [...] non verbum e verbo sed sensum exprimere de sensu.

Oui, quant à moi, non seulement je le confesse, mais je le professe haut et fort: quand je traduis les Grecs, ce n'est pas mot à mot mais selon le sens que je m'exprime.<sup>16</sup>

Le rôle du traducteur est donc, depuis Cicéron, celui d'un *orator* chargé de préserver les textes du passé grâce à une transposition dans la langue et la culture d'arrivée, ce qui garde intacte la possibilité d'une expression rhétorique individuelle, une marge de création et de liberté. Du discours des Anciens, la Renaissance retiendra, autant que le principe anti-littéraliste, sa formulation paradoxale, qui veut que, bien que le mot à mot soit récusé, l'exigence de fidélité reste entière. La problématique majeure de la traduction, où le désir de création littéraire est écartelé entre la nécessaire transmission d'un sens et la souhaitable fidélité à la lettre d'un texte, est posée d'emblée par les auteurs antiques.

## 2. La problématique humaniste

Les humanistes élaborent une nouvelle théorie de la traduction,<sup>17</sup> grammaticale et rhétorique, mettant l'accent sur la notion de construction d'un texte. Les principes hérités de l'Antiquité, fondés sur la traduction du grec en latin, sont remis à l'honneur, et la traduction apparaît tout d'abord comme un exercice lié à l'apprentissage de la grammaire, puis de la rhétorique. Les premiers humanistes italiens affinent cette approche en théorisant leur pratique de traducteur au milieu

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jérôme, *Epistulae*, Ep. 57, 5: 'arduum ut, quæ in alia lingua bene dicta sunt, eundem decorem in translatione conservent', et 11: 'quanta enim apud Græcos bene dicuntur quæ, si ad verbum transferamus, in Latino non resonant'.

<sup>16</sup> Jérôme, *Epistulae*, Ep. 57, 5. Cf. également les paragraphes suivants: 'transposui ut nihil desit ex sensu, cum aliquid desit ex verbis et quasi captivos sensus in suam linguam victoris iure transposui' (57, 6); 'eundem sensum aliis sermonibus indicavit' (57, 9).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation*, pp. 25–54.

du xv<sup>e</sup> s.<sup>18</sup> Une première génération d'humanistes est formée à l'école de Manuele Chrysoloras, auprès duquel ils ont acquis une certaine maîtrise de la langue grecque autant qu'une technique assurée de la traduction. Parmi eux, quelques théoriciens comme Coluccio Salutati et surtout Leonardo Bruni (avec son *De Interpretatione recta* composé vers 1426) se risquent, au détour de leurs préfaces ou au fil de leur correspondance, à énoncer des règles pour ces nouvelles traductions. La réflexion de Bruni,<sup>19</sup> notamment, qui s'ordonne autour de deux principes — compréhension poussée du texte-source grâce à une connaissance approfondie des langues, puis traduction articulée aux notions de *vis* et d'*enargeia*, visant à transmettre un discours (*oratio*) dans sa globalité — permet l'avènement d'une théorie renouvelée de la traduction.<sup>20</sup> Elle se décline autour des deux mêmes exigences de fidélité et d'éloquence. Ces premières traductions humanistes se veulent en rupture avec une tradition médiévale présentée comme absurdement littérale.

### 3. Les principes érasmiens.

Elaborée progressivement entre 1503 et 1506, la théorie érasmiennne de la traduction, qui emprunte à la tradition antique autant qu'à ses prédécesseurs italiens, a évolué d'un certain littéralisme relevant d'une *via media* prudente à une liberté nettement affirmée. Dans ses premières tentatives de traduction, Érasme définit une 'voie moyenne' placée théoriquement sous l'égide de Cicéron. En réalité, cette *via media* reflète une attitude de dévotion quasi religieuse au texte-source, position qui s'explique par la prudence du néophyte qu'est alors l'humaniste. Quoique l'autorité cicéronienne soit invoquée de manière explicite,<sup>21</sup> le rapport d'Érasme à son illustre modèle est complexe: il avoue trouver excessive la liberté que Cicéron accorde au traducteur.

[...] mihi non perinde probatur illa in vertendis authoribus libertas, quam Marcus Tullius ut aliis permittit, ita ipse (pene dixerim immodice) usurpavit.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Berti, 'Traduzioni oratorie fedeli'; De Petris, 'Le teorie umanistiche del tradurre'; Chiesa, 'Ad verbum o ad sensum?'.

<sup>19</sup> Sur Bruni, on consulera également le chapitre que lui consacre Botley dans *Latin Translation in the Renaissance*, pp. 5–62.

<sup>20</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation*, pp. 39–43.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Allen I, Ep. 177. 95–96, préface à la traduction des *Aliquot declamatiunculae* de Libanios, novembre 1503: 'Secutus sum veterem illam M. Tullii regulam'; 'j'ai suivi la vieille règle de Cicéron'.

je n'approuve pas entièrement, quand il s'agit de traduire des auteurs, cette liberté que Cicéron accorde aux autres et qu'il s'est lui-même arrogée (je dirais presque avec excès).<sup>22</sup>

Plus qu'une théorie, cette position révèle un pragmatisme propre au débutant. Plein de scrupules et surtout de prudence, Érasme affiche une révérence à l'égard du texte de départ qu'il exprime en termes forts, empruntés au vocabulaire religieux :

[...] maxime quod ad cæteras difficultates ipse **prudens** non mediocre pondus adiecerim mea in vertendo **religione** [...]; novus interpres in hanc malui peccare partem, ut **superstitiosior** viderer alicui potius quam **licentior**.

d'autant plus que j'ajoutai délibérément aux autres difficultés le fardeau de mon scrupule à traduire fidèlement [...]; traducteur novice, j'ai préféré pécher par excès de zèle que par excès de licence.<sup>23</sup>

Tametsi novus interpres, **religiosior** esse malui quam **audacior**.

Traducteur novice toutefois, j'ai préféré être scrupuleux plutôt qu'audacieux.<sup>24</sup>

À la *religio* ou *superstitio* du traducteur fidèle s'opposent, avec une connotation péjorative, la *licentia* et l'*audacia* de qui s'arroe trop de liberté. Les réserves théoriques d'Érasme à l'égard de Cicéron sont donc corroborées par sa prise de position pragmatique à l'égard du texte de départ. Enfin, chez le traducteur, l'élégance du discours, principe rhétorique, doit être subordonnée à un principe de fidélité :

malui committere ut eruditi candorem et concinnitatem carminis in me forsitan desyderarent quam fidem.

j'ai préféré que les lettrés déplorent dans mon œuvre un manque d'éclat et d'ornement plutôt qu'une absence de fidélité.<sup>25</sup>

De 1503, date de sa première traduction de Libanios,<sup>26</sup> à janvier 1506, où il rédige la préface d'*Hécube* pour le volume des traductions d'Euripide publié chez Josse Bade, Érasme s'en tient à cette *via media*. La recherche du littéralisme ne

<sup>22</sup> Allen I, Ep. 188. 56–58, préface à la traduction d'*Hécube* dans *Euripidis Hecuba et Iphigenia latinae factae Erasmo Roterodamo interprete* (Paris: Josse Bade, septembre 1506).

<sup>23</sup> Allen I, Ep. 188. 50–52, 58–59.

<sup>24</sup> Allen I, Ep. 177. 97–98. Plus tard, il désignera en ces termes l'attitude du traducteur novice qu'il était: 'de pristina illa nostra religione'; 'mes scrupules d'autrefois' (Allen I, Ep. 208. 9).

<sup>25</sup> Allen I, Ep. 188. 61–63.

<sup>26</sup> La préface aux *Aliquot declamatiunculae* de Libanios est datée de novembre 1503, mais cette œuvre ne sera publiée qu'en 1519.

va pourtant pas sans ambiguïté: que penser d'un traducteur qui affirme vouloir *verbum pene verbo reddere* tout en suivant le principe cicéronien *sententia vim ac pondus [...] appendere*?<sup>27</sup>

Dès juillet 1506, date de la préface d'*Iphigénie* pour le volume publié en septembre chez Josse Bade,<sup>28</sup> le ton change. Les nouveaux principes auxquels Érasme, désormais, se référera, sont encore plus clairement définis dans une seconde préface à *Iphigénie*, écrite à l'occasion de la réédition aldine des traductions d'Euripide.<sup>29</sup> Au cours des années, ces principes s'affirment et se précisent dans d'autres préfaces ou à l'occasion de lettres adressées aux membres de la *Respublica litteraria*. La rupture avec son attitude servile à l'égard du texte de départ se marque dans les deux préfaces à *Iphigénie*, où il emploie par deux fois la même expression pour désigner sa position de naguère:

in hac tragœdia vertenda nonnihil de pristina illa religione remisimus.

En traduisant cette tragédie, je me suis quelque peu libéré de mes scrupules d'autrefois.<sup>30</sup>

Érasme adopte une position radicalement différente que l'adverbe *nonnihil* vient à peine tempérer. C'est précisément en abandonnant la révérence excessive qui l'aveugle qu'il espère atteindre la véritable fidélité. Une dialectique de la traduction se dessine: il faut se défaire de ses scrupules et de son attachement au texte de départ pour mieux servir l'œuvre traduite. L'argumentation de la seconde préface développe les thèmes de la première:

Nobis tamen visum est pristina illa nostra religione non nihil remittere, ne non hac etiam in parte congrueremus argumento.

J'ai cru bon de me libérer quelque peu de mes scrupules d'autrefois, afin par cela même de m'approcher au plus près du sujet.<sup>31</sup>

L'emploi de la double négation *ne non* est insistant: l'abandon des scrupules de naguère *n'ira pas sans* une adaptation meilleure au sujet de la tragédie.<sup>32</sup> Et il conclut en réaffirmant ne rien viser sinon la fidélité:

<sup>27</sup> Allen I, Ep. 188. 54–55.

<sup>28</sup> Allen I, Ep. 198, préface à *Iphigénie*, dans l'édition parisienne de Josse Bade.

<sup>29</sup> Allen I, Ep. 208, préface à *Iphigénie*, in Euripides, *Hecuba*, et *Iphigenia in Aulide Euripidis tragoediae*.

<sup>30</sup> Allen I, Ep. 198. 2–3. Cf. de même Allen I, Ep. 208.

<sup>31</sup> Allen I, Ep. 208. 8–10.

<sup>32</sup> *Argumentum* désigne ici le sujet traité, la matière de la pièce.



ita rursum ut ab interpretis fide neutiquam recederemus.

Sans jamais m'écarter de la fidélité d'un interprète.<sup>33</sup>

Cette inflexion nouvelle donnée par Érasme à sa théorie de la traduction est à rapprocher d'un tournant dans le choix des textes traduits: entre 1503 et 1516, il s'adonne à la traduction d'œuvres classiques; c'est en 1506–07 que paraissent les deux préfaces d'*Iphigénie* qui consacrent le passage d'une théorie de la 'voie moyenne' à une théorie de la fidélité dans la liberté. Entre 1516 — traduction du Nouveau Testament — et 1527, Érasme traduit indifféremment textes classiques et textes patristiques. Puis, à partir de 1527, sa production s'oriente exclusivement vers les textes patristiques. Or, dès 1506, la rupture avec la première théorie très scrupuleuse de la traduction s'accompagne de la conscience que la traduction des textes classiques n'est qu'une propédeutique à la traduction d'œuvres patristiques, comme en témoigne la préface à l'*Hécube* d'Euripide.<sup>34</sup> Pourtant, paradoxalement, alors qu'il s'agit de textes religieux, la distance qu'affecte désormais Érasme à l'égard de son texte-source fait naître une nouvelle liberté, définie en des termes qui relèvent de catégories rhétoriques. La liberté que se donne le traducteur conduit à l'éloquence, spécialement dans la traduction d'œuvres patristiques. Si la bonne traduction (*felix*) relève de la rhétorique, dans le souci incessant de la fidélité (*fidelitas*), c'est autant pour un motif subjectif — la liberté du traducteur — que pour une raison objective: toute traduction est acte de persuasion, toute traduction patristique est, de surcroît, tentative de conversion. La *copia* ou l'art de persuader selon Érasme se décline en effet selon le schéma cicéronien *docere, flectere, delectare* — enseigner, émouvoir et plaire — mais infléchi en un sens chrétien: l'*eloquentia* ou la *copia* érasmiennne sont au service de la *pietas* qu'il s'agit de restaurer et d'asseoir au sein de la chrétienté, but ultime des traductions d'Érasme. *Docere*, c'est enseigner en adoptant la simplicité, la clarté, en s'adaptant à son auditoire. Par la grâce de cet enseignement, on peut obtenir la conversion à la piété: *flectere*, c'est tourner son public vers le Christ, source ultime de tout plaisir (*delectare*).

La simplicité, premier principe auquel doit se conformer le traducteur, est une notion clé de l'éloquence érasmiennne, vantée comme l'une de ces catégories ressortissant à la fois de la traduction et de la rhétorique, qui viennent donner un cadre à la liberté du traducteur-auteur:

Mihi in vertendo semper placuit fidelis et erudita simplicitas.

Pour ma part, dans la traduction, c'est la simplicité fidèle et érudite qui m'a toujours plu.

<sup>33</sup> Allen I, Ep. 208. 11–12.

<sup>34</sup> Allen I, Ep. 188. 1–3, 85–86.

déclare Érasme.<sup>35</sup> La *simplicitas* est d'abord catégorie rhétorique: dans le *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum*, Érasme définit le meilleur style — la *copia* — comme l'équilibre entre abondance et brièveté, que caractérisent certaines qualités du discours; la simplicité y côtoie la propriété et l'élégance:

[...] verborum **proprietas** et **elegantia**. Cui si accesserit **simplicitas**, facile vitabitur obscuritas.

[il faut viser] la propriété et l'élégance des termes. Si on y ajoute la simplicité, on évitera aisément l'obscurité.<sup>36</sup>

L'autre grand principe de la théorie érasmiennne de la traduction est la clarté: *perspicuitas* ou *candor*. Or, ces substantifs renvoient à la conception dominante d'une rhétorique de l'*enargeia*, tout comme les adjectifs *explanatus* et *dilucidus* qui appartiennent au même champ sémantique.<sup>37</sup> Dans les premières préfaces de traductions, comme celle d'*Hécube*, le terme de *candor* vient caractériser la traduction et ajoute une nuance d'éclat à la notion de clarté;<sup>38</sup> tant qu'on la croit opposée à la fidélité, on préfère sacrifier la première à la seconde.<sup>39</sup> En revanche, à partir de la préface d'*Iphigénie*, le terme revêt une connotation positive:

in hac tragœdia vertenda, nonnihil de pristina illa religione remisimus, pauloque maiorem habuimus rationem candoris et perspicuitatis.

en traduisant cette tragédie, j'ai abandonné quelque peu mes anciens scrupules et j'ai fait davantage place à l'éclat et à la clarté.<sup>40</sup>

De même, dans une lettre envoyée à Antoine Pucci pour défendre sa version du *Novum Testamentum*,<sup>41</sup> Érasme s'enorgueillit d'avoir clarifié le texte évangélique:

<sup>35</sup> Allen IX, Ep. 2466. 236–37, mars 1531, à Nicolas Mallarius.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. ASD I-6, p. 280, ll. 88–89.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Galand-Hallyn, 'La Rhétorique en Italie à la fin du Quattrocento', p. 177: 'Les Anciens associaient l'effet de présence obtenu par l'*evidentia* à une qualité du style, la *perspicuitas*, transparence du texte aisément intelligible'.

<sup>38</sup> En latin classique, *candor*, appliqué au style, signifierait *clarté* plus qu'*éclat*: cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, III, 248, ll. 66–69, qui donne pour seules références deux occurrences du terme chez Quintilien. Il semble pourtant que la nuance de *brillant* — voire de *cliquant* dans un contexte péjoratif — est présente chez Érasme.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Allen I, Ep. 188.

<sup>40</sup> Allen I, Ep. 198. 2–4.

<sup>41</sup> Allen III, Ep. 860. 37–39.

Deinde dedimus operam ut quæ prius lectorem torquebant vel amphibologia, vel obscuritate sermonis, vel orationis vitiis aut incommodis, iam explanata sint ac dilucida.

j'ai œuvré pour que les passages qui auparavant mettaient le lecteur à rude épreuve soit par l'amphibologie ou l'obscurité du langage, soit par des défauts ou des incohérences dans l'exposé, fussent dorénavant intelligibles et clarifiés.

En reste, l'éloquence ne saurait se concevoir pour Érasme sans la clarté, qui la fonde. Dans le *Ciceronianus*, elle définit, aux côtés de la *copia*, le vrai style cicéronien :

Nec ulla res vetat quo minus idem et christiane dicat et ciceroniane, si modo fat-eris eum ciceronianum qui **dilucide**, **copiose**, vehementer et apposite dicat pro rei natura, proque temporum ac personarum conditione.

Rien n'empêche que le même écrivain parle chrétien et cicéronien, si l'on qualifie de cicéronien celui qui s'exprime avec de manière claire, abondante, forte et appropriée à la nature de la question, à l'époque et aux personnes.<sup>42</sup>

En fait, pour la plupart des humanistes de cette période, qui suivent l'exemple italien, l'art rhétorique se mesure avant tout à la mise en œuvre de l'*enargeia* ou *evidentia*, 'force illusionniste de la parole',<sup>43</sup> par la vertu de la *copia*. L'orateur talentueux doit être capable de rendre manifeste, de placer en quelque sorte sous les yeux de l'auditeur ou du lecteur son univers mental, l'image qu'il se fait du réel, en mobilisant les ressources potentielles de la *copia verborum ac rerum*, ordonnée par les principes de simplicité, clarté et didactisme. L'orateur, outre ses capacités d'*inventio* et sa *copia rerum*, doit posséder la *copia verborum*, la richesse lexicale, et l'appliquer à bon escient — *cum proprietate*, la *proprietas* ou *idioma* désignant la propriété des termes, leur justesse et leur pertinence dans une langue donnée. Mais il lui faut en outre être capable de connaître la valeur de ces termes, de discerner les nuances des *verba* qui sont à sa disposition, c'est-à-dire d'en utiliser l'*emphasis* pour conférer à une notion toute sa plénitude, déployer tout l'éventail de connotations que recèle chaque terme.

En fait, si la connaissance et la maîtrise du couple *idioma-emphasis* manifestent le bon latiniste,<sup>44</sup> l'articulation correcte entre les deux notions révèle aussi le vrai traducteur : la fidélité véritable se mesure à la perception de ces nuances dans

<sup>42</sup> *Ciceronianus*, ASD I-2, p. 650, ll. 30–33.

<sup>43</sup> Galand-Hallyn, 'La Rhétorique en Italie à la fin du Quattrocento', pp. 131–90.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Chomarat, II, 804.

la langue de départ et à leur rendu par la mobilisation de toutes les ressources de la langue d'arrivée.

Le traducteur, selon Érasme, doit transmettre un texte auquel la maîtrise du couple *proprietas-emphasis* confère à la fois légitimité — du point de vue du traducteur — et originalité — le traducteur se revendiquant auteur. C'est ainsi que réussira le pari fondateur de tout acte de traduction: potentialiser le texte de départ. Car non seulement la traduction révèle de l'œuvre traduite un autre versant, faisant apparaître des facettes invisibles dans l'original, mais elle éveille des possibilités encore latentes de la langue que, de manière distincte de la littérature, elle seule a le pouvoir de manifester.<sup>45</sup>

## II. La question du langage et de l'herméneutique

La théorie de la traduction est donc intimement liée à la question de la langue et, au-delà encore, à celle, fondamentale, de l'herméneutique: comment, par le truchement des mots, comprendre le monde et le donner à comprendre? De fait, la théorie de la traduction humaniste, telle que la décline Érasme, nous paraît être la mise en pratique des principes qui, pour lui, régissent tout acte de langage.

La réflexion sur l'herméneutique et le pouvoir du langage est alors alimentée de manière renouvelée, sur fond de crise intellectuelle: le nominalisme occamien, désormais reçu, fissure la confiance dans le réalisme de type aristotélicien qu'entretenait, grâce aux ressources de sa dialectique, la *via antiqua* de la logique thomiste. En effet, dès le XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, la révolution logique qui, d'Oxford, gagne rapidement Paris,<sup>46</sup> renverse la conception augustinienne, qui prévalait jusqu'alors, d'un monde dualiste et hiérarchisé, où le sensible n'était tenu que pour l'image, spéculaire ou symbolique, de l'intelligible, et où la relation de l'homme à son créateur était rendue possible précisément par le truchement de cet univers de signes. Le rapport de signification n'existant qu'entre termes et concepts, les choses étant tenues à l'arrière-plan, n'ayant pour seule utilité que de fournir un point d'appui au concept, toute l'herméneutique se mouvait dans la sphère de l'intelligible. Mais le 'nominalisme conceptuel' d'Occam trouble cette harmonie en ouvrant la voie à une science du sensible et de l'expérimentation, en même temps qu'il donne sa

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>46</sup> Sur le nominalisme occamien, voir Biard, *Logique et théorie*, et Paqué, *Le Statut parisien des nominalistes*, édition commentée du statut publié en 1340 par l'université de Paris pour contrer l'influence jugée pernicieuse des thèses d'Occam. Cf. aussi Libera, *La Querelle des universaux*, pp. 370–442.

place et sa mesure à l'individu comme sujet percevant. La sémiologie sur laquelle se fonde la *via moderna* de la logique occamiste procède à un déplacement du signifié vers la chose extérieure au lieu d'identifier ce signifié au concept. Désormais, l'idée s'impose que le langage a une fonction conventionnelle. Le passage entre monde sensible et intellection ne se fait plus par le biais spéculaire, mais par un travail logico-linguistique grâce auquel une signification ne peut plus être donnée à un mot isolé — comme le postulait la conception ontologique du langage — mais seulement à un terme défini comme élément d'une proposition, dans son contexte.

La propagation des thèses nominalistes a deux conséquences majeures: d'un côté, le divorce consommé entre les mots et les choses, que postule le nominalisme, rend suspect l'acte de langage; mais de l'autre, outre l'émergence de l'individu, le nominalisme favorise la résurgence de la rhétorique: l'attention se porte dès lors non plus sur les mots pris isolément, invitant à considérer un concept, mais sur les termes d'un discours dans son processus de signification et de conviction, dans sa référence variable aux choses et dans sa visée de l'interlocuteur.

Or, la plupart des humanistes sont marqués, directement ou indirectement, par l'expérience du nominalisme:<sup>47</sup> les maîtres de Luther à l'université d'Erfurt se réclament de l'occamisme et la spiritualité nordique des Frères de la Vie Commune,<sup>48</sup> dont le jeune Érasme est nourri, est redevable sur bien des points aux thèses du *Venerabilis inceptor*.<sup>49</sup> L'humaniste, dont la figure idéale est celle de l'orateur, doit donc jouer de cette ambivalence fondamentale qui affecte désormais le langage.

Les théories érasmiennes sur la langue et le langage reflètent cette conception. Les questions relatives au langage et à la langue sont d'abord abordées par Érasme dans la *Lingua*, publiée chez Froben en 1525.<sup>50</sup> Ce traité paraît au moment où la polémique avec Luther s'envenime — le *De libero arbitrio* date de 1524 — où la multiplication des pamphlets et des controverses conduit les chrétiens à douter de la vérité des discours. Érasme cherche alors à poser des principes intangibles à propos du langage, à établir une éloquence qui fasse sens. Il trace les frontières entre langue et langage — *lingua* d'un côté, *logos*, *oratio* ou *sermo* de l'autre —

<sup>47</sup> Au rebours de Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, p. 250, qui récuse tout lien entre rhétorique humaniste et logique nominaliste, d'autres chercheurs mettent aujourd'hui en évidence le terreau intellectuel commun à l'humanisme et la scolastique: cf. Vasoli, 'L'Humanisme rhétorique en Italie', p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ebeling, *Luther: Introduction à une réflexion théologique*, p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Chaunu, *Église, culture et société*, p. 137. Sur les Frères de la Vie Commune, cf. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*; Post, *The Modern Devotion*.

<sup>50</sup> *De linguae usu ac abusu*, éd. par J. H. Waszink, ASD IV-1A.

entre bavardage et discours. Après deux parties consacrées, l'une à la *physis* de la langue, l'autre à la description des diverses formes d'*abusus linguae*, Érasme en vient, dans une troisième et dernière section, à évoquer le seul remède possible: le langage comme miroir de l'âme.<sup>51</sup> Le principe salvateur consiste à restaurer un langage qui vient du cœur, de l'âme (*cor, anima*),<sup>52</sup> qui soit l'expression du *Deus intus*, du Dieu intérieur qui habite chacun, un langage qui soit animé par le souffle (*spiritus*) divin, à l'imitation du langage du Christ.<sup>53</sup> Le message du Christ, Verbe de Dieu et Vérité, est limpide: que jamais la langue ne diffère de l'âme.

Eqoue Dei filius, qui venit in terras, ut per eum cognosceremus mentem Dei, sermo patris dici voluit, et idem veritas dici voluit, quod turpissimum sit linguam ab animo dissidere.

C'est pourquoi le fils de Dieu, qui est descendu sur terre, pour nous faire connaître l'esprit de Dieu, a voulu être appelé Verbe du Père, et de même être appelé Vérité, en sorte qu'il est parfaitement honteux que la langue diffère de l'âme.<sup>54</sup>

Pour Érasme, cette nécessité n'est pas induite par une qualité intrinsèque du langage, qui serait naturellement miroir de l'âme, mais répond à un impératif moral (*quod turpissimum sit [...]*), celui de proscrire le mensonge. Faire en sorte que le langage proféré soit en conformité avec le langage mental s'avère une nécessité pour que le verbe soit efficace. Érasme oppose ainsi la Pentecôte à Babel,<sup>55</sup> le concert harmonieux né du don des langues et la cacophonie issue de la confusion. Dans un monde désormais retombé dans le babélisme,<sup>56</sup> il convient de restaurer le pacte apostolique de la Pentecôte, cette confusion positive, dans le consensus, des

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Demonet, *Les Voix du signe*, pp. 247–74. Le langage est traditionnellement présenté comme 'miroir de l'âme' depuis Augustin jusqu'à Thomas d'Aquin.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *ASD* IV-1A, p. 128, ll. 338–39: 'Verum tale cor est, qualis est lingua'; 'en vérité, tel cœur, telle langue'.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *ASD* IV-1A, p. 173, ll. 879–80: 'Nemo Christi linguam imitari potest, nisi Christi spiritum hauserit'; 'personne ne peut imiter la langue du Christ, s'il n'est imprégné du souffle du Christ'.

<sup>54</sup> *ASD* IV-1A, p. 82, ll. 851–53.

<sup>55</sup> À propos de Babel et de la Pentecôte, cf. Demonet, *Les Voix du signe*, p. 43 sq. et 154 sq., où est mise en évidence l'interprétation symbolique, de plus en plus éloignée de la lettre, que proposent les humanistes des mythes de Babel et de la Pentecôte.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *ASD* IV-1A, p. 173, ll. 890–92: 'Hodie vero quum videmus tot opinionibus dissidere philosophorum scholas, tot dogmatibus tamque diversis digladiari Christianos omnes, nonne referimus structuram turris Babel?'; 'or aujourd'hui où nous voyons les écoles philosophiques divisées entre tant d'opinions, l'ensemble de la Chrétienté déchirée par des dogmes si nombreux et divers, n'édifions-nous pas une nouvelle tour de Babel?'

langues inspirées par Dieu, ce concert venant du cœur, de l'âme, tout pénétré de l'esprit divin, dont témoignent les Apôtres:

Loquebantur variis linguis, sed consentientibus, erat enim illis cor unum, et anima una, quia spiritus unus impleverat omnes.

Ils parlaient en diverses langues, mais se comprenaient, car ils n'avaient qu'un seul cœur, et une seule âme, parce qu'un seul souffle les animait tous.<sup>57</sup>

Car le langage permet de créer un lien (*convictus*)<sup>58</sup> positif entre les hommes, par la persuasion d'une juste rhétorique, d'une éloquence signifiante. Ce sont là les fondements nécessaires au rétablissement d'une cité chrétienne, humaniste, mise à mal par les dissensions de Babel.<sup>59</sup> La visée d'une langue originelle, universelle, reflet du Logos christique, venant du cœur de chaque chrétien, est la condition première de la restauration d'une cité ou d'une République des lettres chrétienne, où la crédibilité du langage soit enfin assurée.

Ces mêmes thèses sont reprises dans l'ouvrage monumental sur le prédicateur chrétien qu'Érasme a longtemps projeté et pour lequel il a œuvré plusieurs années, qui paraît en 1535 sous le titre d'*Ecclesiastes*.<sup>60</sup> Grand traité d'éloquence chrétienne, il fixe les règles à suivre, de la composition des sermons jusqu'à la montée de l'orateur en chaire. Mais il permet aussi de réaffirmer la thèse avancée dans la *Lingua* dix ans auparavant: le cœur humain, dépositaire de la Parole évangélique, doit s'en faire l'interprète dans la parole humaine. Un rapport d'analogie s'établit entre le fonctionnement du langage et le contenu de la Révélation; la parole humaine doit être reflet de l'âme, sur le modèle du Verbe christique, image du Père, sous peine de se voir privée de son être même:

Quemadmodum autem unicum illud Dei Verbum imago est Patris [...], ita humanæ mentis imago quædam est oratio. Quæ si dissideat ab animo unde proficiscitur, ne orationis quidem meretur vocabulum.

<sup>57</sup> ASD IV-1A, p. 173, ll. 888–90.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. ASD IV-1A, p. 43, ll. 554–55: 'itaque quum sermo nobis potissimum in hoc datus sit a deo, ut homini cum homini convictus sit iucundior'; 'la principale raison pour laquelle Dieu nous a donné la parole, c'est pour établir un lien entre les hommes plus harmonieux'.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. ASD IV-1A, p. 174, ll. 917–18: 'O domus quam dissipata es, o civitas quam dissecta es!'; 'O maison anéantie, ô cité détruite!'

<sup>60</sup> *Ecclesiastes sive de ratione concionandi*, ASD V-4 (livres I et II), V-5 (livres III et IV).

De même que seul le Verbe de Dieu est l'image du Père, l'image de l'esprit humain est le discours. S'il diffère de l'âme dont il provient, il ne mérite pas même le nom de discours.<sup>61</sup>

Chaque chrétien, membre de la *Respublica christiana*, doit avoir le cœur habité par l'esprit du Christ. L'ambition de l'*Ecclesiastes* est de parvenir à faire coïncider les 'deux circuits' de la parole, la vérité du Logos christique et la persuasion du cœur de l'homme.<sup>62</sup> À nouveau, il est affirmé que le langage, quand il est reflet de la langue du *deus intus*, doit permettre de créer un lien entre les hommes par la force persuasive d'une juste éloquence qui fasse sens. Car, dans la mise en place de ce rapport analogique entre langage et Parole, Érasme ne se limite pas au mot isolé, mais considère le langage dans son déploiement en discours. Il envisage la Parole du Christ comme une parole adressée, où prévaut le *sermo* plus que le *verbum*, ce dont témoigne sa proposition de traduction pour les premiers termes de l'Évangile johannique, glosée dans ses *Annotationes*: s'il substitue *sermo* à *verbum*, c'est, dit-il, afin de présenter la Parole comme un discours au lieu de la réduire à une seule de ses composantes.<sup>63</sup>

Les principes qui doivent guider l'acte du traduire sont donc posés au regard des conditions même de possibilité de la traduction qu'établit la théorie de la langue et du langage: l'élaboration d'un langage véridique et d'une éloquence signifiante qu'il appartient aux membres de la *Respublica litteraria* de promouvoir, à travers leur enseignement et leurs écrits.<sup>64</sup> À l'exigence de fidélité dans la traduction équivalait la contrainte de vérité dans le langage, langage permettant de construire la *Respublica litteraria* sur les plus solides des fondements.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ASD* v-4, p. 40, ll. 133–35 et 137–38.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Fumaroli, *L'Age de l'éloquence*, p. 107.

<sup>63</sup> Cet exemple est également cité par Demonet, *Les Voix du signe*, p. 252.

<sup>64</sup> Pour Érasme, le maintien de la langue dans son intégrité requiert un effort: le rôle de garant de la langue revient aux enseignants et aux érudits. Cf. Chomarat, I, 79–86.



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# TWO MODELS OF HUMANIST LETTER-WRITING: DESIDERIUS ERASMUS AND JUSTUS LIPSIUS

Jeanine De Landtsheer

This paper focuses upon two cornerstones of sixteenth-century humanism, both prolific writers of letters, Desiderius Erasmus and Justus Lipsius, and compares their correspondences.<sup>1</sup> Both scholars first saw the light of day in the Low Countries, the former in Rotterdam, the latter in Overijse, a hamlet equidistant from Brussels and Leuven. While Erasmus was the dominant figure on the humanist scene during the first decades of the century, Lipsius was no less highly esteemed by his contemporaries during the final part of the century and up to 1606, when he died in Leuven. Both left an awe-inspiring pile of editions and publications behind them, although Lipsius did not publish any translations from the Greek.<sup>2</sup> They also kept up a lively correspondence with an

<sup>1</sup> For the proofreading of my English, I am greatly indebted to Charles Fantazzi (University of East Carolina). Chris Heesakkers (University of Amsterdam — University of Leiden) kindly accepted to read the penultimate version and offered some useful suggestions.

More recent, general publications on Justus Lipsius include Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics*; Tournoy, Papy, and De Landtsheer, eds, *Lipsius en Leuven*; Dusoier, De Landtsheer, and Imhof, eds, *Justus Lipsius*; Enenkel and Heesakkers, eds, *Justus Lipsius in Leiden*; Laureys and others, *The World of Justus Lipsius*; De Landtsheer, *Lieveling van de Latijnse taal*; De Landtsheer, Sacré, and Coppens, eds, *Justus Lipsius*; De Landtsheer and Delsaerd, *'Iam illustravit omnia'*

<sup>2</sup> The only exceptions are a section of the Περὶ ἐρμηνείας, erroneously attributed to Demetrius of Phaleron, added with a Latin translation as an appendix to the *Epistolica institutio* (Leiden: Franciscus Raphelengius, 1591) and chapters 19–42 of Polybius, *Historiae*, book VI, about Roman warfare, which were the departing point for his *De militia Romana* (Antwerpen: Widow Plantin and Johannes Moretus, 1595–96). Lipsius quoted the Greek text from the edition of Janus Lascaris (Venice, 1529), albeit rearranged in an order more suitable to his own purpose, but he preferred to publish his own translation because it was more concise and pithy than the one by Lascaris.

extensive network of fellow humanists and prominent men throughout Europe. There is one explicit link between the two of them, viz. Lipsius's great-uncle Martinus Lipsius, a regular canon of the Augustinian friars of St Maartensdal in Leuven.<sup>3</sup> He had helped Erasmus with his edition of Augustine and his name occurs among Erasmus's correspondents, a fact proudly mentioned by Lipsius in an autobiographical letter,<sup>4</sup> and repeated by his first biographer Aubertus Miraeus,<sup>5</sup> as well as by some of his *laudatores funebres* or *memoriales*.<sup>6</sup>

During the first half of their lives both scholars travelled extensively for several years — Lipsius spent about two years in Rome, partly as a secretary of the Latin correspondence of Antoine Perrenot, Cardinal de Granvelle, sojourned a few weeks at Emperor Maximilian II's court in Vienna in the summer of 1572, lectured at Jena University between October 1572 and March 1574, and after a brief sojourn in Cologne, returned to his native country around New Year 1575. Wherever both scholars stayed, they established good contacts with the leading humanists. They finally settled, in Erasmus's case in Basle, with an

<sup>3</sup> On Martinus Lipsius (Brussels, c. 1492 — Lens, before 1555/59), see *CWE* 2, 333–34, and De Vocht, *History of the Foundation and the Rise of the Collegium*, III, 71–75. The two scholars became acquainted in 1516 and kept corresponding until Erasmus's death.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ILE*, XIII, 00 10 01, 21–23: *propatruus Martinus Lipsius, vir ob doctrinam Erasmo familiaris et a suis illiusque scriptis notus*. *ILE* refers to *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, a series published under the aegis of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten in Brussels. Pars I: 1564–83, ed. by Alois Gerlo, Marcel A. Nauwelaerts, and Hendrik D. L. Vervliet (1978); Pars II: 1584–87, ed. by Marcel A. Nauwelaerts *iuvante* Sylvette Sué, (1983); Pars III: 1588–90, ed. by Sylvette Sué and Hugo Peeters (1987); Pars IV: 1591, ed. by Sylvette Sué and Jeanine De Landtsheer (2012); Pars V: 1592, ed. by Jeanine De Landtsheer and Jacques Kluyskens (1991); Pars VI: 1593, ed. by Jeanine De Landtsheer (1994); Pars VII: 1594, ed. by Jeanine De Landtsheer (1997); Pars VIII: 1595, ed. by Jeanine De Landtsheer (2004); Pars [IX]: 1596, ed. by Hugo Peeters [forthcoming]; Pars [XI]: 1598, ed. by Tom Deneire [forthcoming]; Pars XIII: 1600, ed. by Jan Papy, (2000); Pars XIV: 1601, ed. by Jeanine De Landtsheer (2006); Pars [xv]: 1602, ed. by Jeanine De Landtsheer [forthcoming]; Pars [xvi]: 1603, ed. by Filip Vanhaecke [forthcoming]. I am also preparing the edition of the final parts, XVII–XIX.

<sup>5</sup> Miraeus, *De obitu Iusti Lipsi epistola*, a few years later reworked into Miraeus, *Vita sive Elogium Iusti Lipsi*, reissued four years later as part of the thoroughly revised and extended edition of Miraeus, *Iusti Lipsi sapientiae et litterarum*, pp. 105–50.

<sup>6</sup> So, for instance, in the *laudatio funebris* delivered by his colleague Gerardus Corselius: 'Propatruus Martinus Lipsius in D[ivi] Martini coenobio hic Canonicus regularis, inter illustres doctrina viros censitus est, et ab veterum scriptorum editione ac emendatione *Desideriique Erasmi* familiaritate et scriptis clarus fuit'. The oration was published in the above-mentioned Miraeus, *Iusti Lipsi sapientiae et litterarum*, pp. 151–62.

excursion to Freiburg between 1529 and 1535, whereas Lipsius spent thirteen years in Leiden (March 1579–March 1591) before definitively returning to Leuven (August 1592–March 1606). Both had their favourite printers living close at hand, the Froben and the Plantin-Moretus family respectively, and these printing houses played an important part in publicizing their scholarly achievements: carefully published books, which the authors were able to follow page by page throughout the printing process, correctors to cast a first glance at the proofs before passing them to the author, the smooth and quick delivery of the books to the learned circles all over Christian Europe, reprints or reissues whenever the stocks were diminishing, and, finally, a secure way to forward their correspondence to colleagues in more distant parts of Europe. In Lipsius's case a number of letters were written or answered shortly before the semi-annual bookfair in Frankfurt, so that the representatives of the *Officina Plantiniana* could pass them either into the hands of the addressees themselves or to printers with whom they had contacts or vice versa. Often these letters were accompanied by presents, mostly books. Moreover, the business arrangements were strengthened by ties of sincere friendship.

It should also be mentioned that both authors published a manual on letter-writing, Erasmus his *Opus de conscribendis epistolis* (Basle: Johann Froben, 1522) and Lipsius his *Epistolica institutio* (Leiden: Franciscus Raphelengius, 1591). As was the case with many of Erasmus's works, an unauthorized edition had appeared already the year before,<sup>7</sup> whereas Lipsius agreed to have his *Epistolica institutio, excepta e dictantis eius ore, anno M.D.LXXXVII, mense Iunio* sent to the press after an explicit warning by Franciscus Raphelengius that a German printer had the intention to do so.<sup>8</sup> Yet while Erasmus's *Opus*, adding fictitious examples of different types of letters, is by far the most comprehensive manual on the topic and became a source of inspiration for whoever wrote on the subject in the following centuries, Lipsius's *Epistolica institutio* was focused on immediate, practical use by his students.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> It was put to press by John Siberch (Cambridge, 1521). For recent editions, see respectively Erasmus, *De conscribendis epistolis*, ed. by Margolin, and Lipsius, *Principles of Letter-Writing*, ed. by Young and Hester.

<sup>8</sup> See *ILE*, III, 90 10 28 R: 'Ede libellum, potius quam ut alius alibi eum edat, quod ais te comperisse'.

<sup>9</sup> Both treatises are discussed and compared in Morford, 'Life and Letters in Lipsius's Teaching'.

## 1. *The Tradition of the Text*

From Erasmus's correspondence about 3200 letters are known, both written by him or to him, a considerable part of which was printed during his lifetime, on his own initiative or under his supervision.<sup>10</sup> Since the final volume of Allen's *Opus epistolarum* came from the press, only some forty more have been discovered.<sup>11</sup> The success of Allen's exemplary edition and its plethora of information shedding light on innumerable aspects of the life, work, and ideas of both Erasmus and his contemporaries, urged scholars in Belgium to undertake a similar project concerning Lipsius.<sup>12</sup> In the late 1960s Alois Gerlo and Hendrik D. L. Vervliet published an inventory, *Inventaire de la correspondance de Juste Lipse, 1564–1606* (Antwerpen: Éditions Scientifiques Érasme, 1968), as well as the edition of a limited number of letters by way of example, viz. the correspondence preserved at the Antwerp Plantin-Moretus Museum.<sup>13</sup> Surprisingly enough, the number of Lipsius's still extant letters considerably exceeded that of his predecessor, for although he died at the age of only fifty-eight (a lifespan of eleven years less than Erasmus), the total amount listed in the *Inventaire* was estimated at about 4300; however, overlooked letters, not to mention unknown versions, continue to be found.<sup>14</sup> The first part of *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae* (*ILE* in its abbreviated form), 293 letters written between 1564 and 1583, was edited by Alois Gerlo, Hendrik D. L. Vervliet, and Marcel A. Nauwelaerts in 1978 under the aegis of the Royal

<sup>10</sup> A thorough study of Erasmus's correspondence is announced by Bénévent, *Érasme épistolier*. Meanwhile, an interesting and clear survey of the material aspects of Erasmus's correspondence is given by Heesakkers, 'Erasmus Epistolographus'. Erasmus's publication of an increasing number of his letters is sketched on pp. 38–45; part II of the bibliography, on pp. 47–48, offers a survey of the main editions of letters during his lifetime in chronological order. And, of course, Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, cannot be omitted.

<sup>11</sup> See Heesakkers, 'Erasmus Epistolographus', pp. 29–30, n. 2, listing sixteen letters to be added to Allen, and Christine Bénévent, "Supplementa Alleniana": tentative de bilan et perspectives', above in this volume, pp. 35–50.

<sup>12</sup> The idea was strongly pleaded by Herman F. Bouchery at the four hundredth anniversary of Lipsius's birthday (which was delayed by one year because of the post-war situation); see Van der Essen and Bouchery, *Waarom Justus Lipsius gevierd?*

<sup>13</sup> Lipsius, *La Correspondance*, ed. by Gerlo, Vervliet, and Vertessen. It was, nevertheless, decided that in the final edition the annotations should be more elaborate for both philologists' and historians' sake.

<sup>14</sup> For the most recent update of these newly discovered letters, see Deneire, 'An Overlooked Letter from Justus Lipsius', n. 2. But hardly one year later, this list should be completed by about a dozen extra ones.

Academy of Literature, Science and Arts of Belgium, as it was then called, an institution that has adopted the edition as one of its main projects ever since.<sup>15</sup> Whereas the first part of the *ILE* series counts 293 letters written between 1564 and 1583, part two contains 305 letters dating from the years 1584 to 1587 (including five overlooked letters, which should have been incorporated in part one). In the third part 238 letters are gathered written between 1588 and 1590 (also including five overlooked letters, which should have been incorporated in the previous part). From 1591 on the quantity of letters expanded so much that a new part had to be foreseen for every year, each containing between 200 and 300 letters.

Both corpora incorporate the letters either written by Erasmus or Lipsius, and the ones received by them. In both cases the dedicatory letters of the works were included.<sup>16</sup> Allen also edited the letters *Ad Lectorem* or *Lectori*; the editors of *ILE*, however, omitted these, nor did they publish *Epistolicae quaestiones*, a series of fictitious letters dealing with the emendation or explanation of obscure passages in a number of authors from Antiquity.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these many thousands of still extant letters, the real amount must have been considerably higher for both authors, if the innumerable references to letters that either did not reach their destination or were lost for some reason or other during the past five centuries are taken into account. With regard to Erasmus, Heesakkers refers to a complaint that the move from Basle to Freiburg caused the loss of a number of letters, which were very important to the humanist. He also reminds us that Erasmus more than once threw part of his letters

<sup>15</sup> By the end of 2006 parts I–III, V–VIII, and XIII–XIV were available in print, whereas several more can be expected in the near future (cf. supra, n. 4). Newly discovered letters will be inserted in the appropriate part of the *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, if they have not yet been published; earlier letters will be gathered at the end of the final part of the series, *ILE*, XIX, which will include a table of concordance between Gerlo and Vervliet, *Inventaire de la correspondance de Juste Lipse*, and *ILE*, as well as a general index to the whole series.

<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately the dedication of Lipsius, *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri VI* (1589), ‘to the Emperor, the King, and the princes’ in general terms, without naming individuals, was omitted in *ILE*, III, where it belongs. It will be published in *ILE*, XIX, the final volume of the series. On Lipsius’s dedicatory letters, see my article, De Landtsheer, “Per patronos, non per merita gradus est emergendi”.

<sup>17</sup> This series was published for the first time under the title *Epistolicarum quaestionum libri IV* (Antwerpen: Christopher Plantin, 1577) and was incorporated in the *Opera omnia quae ad criticam proprie spectant* from 1585 onwards. It has already been decided to publish these *Epistolicae quaestiones* as a separate part of *ILE* (*pars xx*) once the whole body of the correspondence is available.



into the fire.<sup>18</sup> As to Lipsius, similar remarks can be made. After he left Leiden furtively in March 1591 it was, of course, impossible for him to recover all of his books and his correspondence up to that time. Moreover, the rift of religious controversies rising in Erasmus's time had turned into an unbridgeable abyss in Lipsius's time, and the political and religious troubles between the Northern and Southern Low Countries, still under Spanish rule, took their toll as well. These circumstances made it impossible or perilous to keep up a correspondence with scholars in Catholic countries such as Italy and Spain during the years spent in Leiden, or, conversely, with some of his best friends in the North, particularly when they held prominent positions in the government, once he had returned to the Catholic South.<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly, it also forced him to destroy part of his letters immediately after reading them. It is striking, for instance, that hardly any letters, scarce as they may have been, are left from the correspondence with Plantin between the middle of 1585, when the printer returned to Antwerp, and his death on 1 July 1589.<sup>20</sup> Or in the case of Carolus Clusius, almost all the letters written by the botanist from 1593 onwards, after his move from Frankfurt to Leiden, are missing, whereas Clusius himself carefully kept Lipsius's originals.<sup>21</sup>

The majority of Erasmus's letters were published by himself or at least during his lifetime. Lipsius, in contrast, published only one quarter of his letters put to press, gathered into *Centuriae*. The *Centuria prima*, containing eighty-six letters written by Lipsius and fourteen written to him, appeared in 1586.<sup>22</sup> It was a huge success and two more issues followed in the same year. Yet, when it was reprinted four years later and extended with an additional hundred letters, the humanist had the epistles from others substituted by ones from his own hand, for, as he

<sup>18</sup> See Heesakkers, 'Erasmus Epistolographus', p. 29, n. 1, referring to Allen VIII, Ep. 2203. 24 (the complaint) or Allen IV, Ep. 1206. 26–32 and I, p. 37, 1–2 respectively.

<sup>19</sup> For some concrete examples, see De Landtsheer, 'From Ultima Thule to Finisterra', especially pp. 59–62.

<sup>20</sup> At first, an embargo between North and South at Leicester's instigation made it impossible to write, but a few years later, when business contacts between the two branches of the *Officina Plantiniana* were re-established, it was much easier to confide messages to the personal carriers, apparently some Catholics living in Leiden. And indeed, in Plantin's correspondence from these years several echoes can be found about letters exchanged with Lipsius, whereas the originals have disappeared.

<sup>21</sup> Clusius always meticulously noted down next to the address the date when the letter was written, when it arrived, when he had answered it, and to which of his letters it was an answer, a habit leaving editors some four hundred years later with a whole list of missing letters. See my article De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius and Carolus Clusius', especially p. 294.

<sup>22</sup> Lipsius, *Epistolarum selectarum centuria prima*.



explained in the *Ad lectorem*, letters were like conversations with absent friends. Topics would be mentioned which were intended for the correspondent's eyes only and one would be less cautious with his words than when addressing an audience. And he wrote in apology: 'I should not have put to press — even without asking — what was meant for my eyes only'.<sup>23</sup> Friends and colleagues throughout Europe kept asking for more, but after his return to the Southern Low Countries Lipsius was shying away from calumnies and backbiting. After some years of tergiversation he finally decided to have his *Centuriae* reprinted, now by Johannes Moretus in Antwerp, and to enlarge them with a third one in 1601.<sup>24</sup> In only a few months' time, after the spring book fair of Frankfurt, Moretus was already running out of copies and had begun a reprint. Encouraged by this success Lipsius devoted himself feverishly to some more letter collections so that Moretus could present five new *Centuriae* at the spring book fair of 1602.<sup>25</sup> In the next years Lipsius selected letters for two more *Centuriae*, and entrusted the manuscript to his executor to be published after his death.<sup>26</sup>

In 1722 the Leiden professor Petrus Burmannus, later curator of the University Library, had acquired most of Lipsius's manuscripts and annotated books (though not his library) in an auction; a few years later he edited eight hundred letters, a small part of them occurring already in the *Centuriae*, in his *Sylloges epistolarum*.<sup>27</sup> Other letters or smaller collections appeared in print in the course of the centuries when incorporated in the *opus epistolare* of Lipsius's correspondents, for instance of Dominicus Baudius, Josephus Justus Scaliger, or Isaac Casaubon still

<sup>23</sup> Lipsius, *Epistolarum centuriae duae*. The letters discarded from the first *Centuria* were reissued posthumously in the second part of Lipsius, *Ad C. Suetoni Tranquili*. The new *Centuriae* edition finally contained only two letters which were not from Lipsius's hand, but written by Josephus Justus Scaliger and his father Julius Caesar Scaliger (see *Cent. misc.*, 2, 41–42 (ed. 1590, = 45–46 in all later editions).

<sup>24</sup> *Epistolarum selectarum III centuriae, e quibus tertia nunc primum in lucem emissa*. From 1604 onwards, the third part was considered a separate collection under the title *Epistolarum Centuria singularis ad Italos et Hispanos*.

<sup>25</sup> Scil. the *Epistolarum Centuria singularis ad Germanos et Gallos*, three *Epistolarum Centuriae ad Belgas*, and a *Epistolarum Selectarum Centuria miscellanea*, which was to replace the *Centuria ad Italos et Gallos* as the third part of the *Centuriae miscellaneae* from the reprint of the *Centuriae* in 1605 onwards.

<sup>26</sup> Viz. the *Centuriae miscellaneae quarta et quinta postumae*. For the printing history of Lipsius's *Centuriae*, see my article De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) and the Edition of his *Centuriae*', and Papy, 'La Correspondance de Juste Lipse'.

<sup>27</sup> Burmannus, *Sylloges epistolarum*, vols I and V.

in the seventeenth century,<sup>28</sup> or more recently Abraham Ortelius, Christopher Plantin, Carolus Clusius, or Benito Arias Montano.<sup>29</sup> A number of letters were included in more general collections, such as A. Ramírez, *Epistolario de Justo Lipsio y los españoles* (Madrid, 1966) or the aforementioned *La Correspondance de Juste Lipse conservée au Musée Plantin-Moretus*. Nevertheless, before the *ILE* series was started, the larger half of the correspondence had never been edited before, and most of the published letters had hardly been annotated, which often made them difficult to understand.

An important distinction in the text tradition of both correspondences is that about two thirds of Lipsius's correspondence have been preserved in a manuscript version, mainly at Leiden University.<sup>30</sup> What is shelved as MS Lips. 4 consists of twenty-four files containing in alphabetical order the majority of the original letters addressed to the humanist. His own originals, usually autographs, but sometimes written by a secretary with only the closing formula and the signature in autograph, are preserved at Leiden University Library, the Antwerp Plantin Moretus Museum, and the Brussels Royal Library, not to mention innumerable institutes where only an occasional letter has found its way into the collection. Most of Lipsius's own letters, however, have come to us through copies for his own use, made by a secretary or a student. They are collected in twenty four files, shelved at Leiden University Library as MS Lips. 3(1) to 3(24).<sup>31</sup> Eight of them, MS Lips. 3(13) to 3(20), come in pairs, covering the same letters written between 1594 and 1597, the first years after his return to Leuven. One of the other files, MS Lips. 3(4), containing about two hundred letters, is clearly composed with the intention of publishing at least part of it in another *Centuria*. At the top of a number of those letters Lipsius added *EPISTOLA* with or without a Roman numeral; he completed the formula of address with the appropriate titles, added translations of Greek words or quotations in the margin,<sup>32</sup> corrected some

<sup>28</sup> See Baudius, *Epistolarum centuriae tres*; Scaliger, *Epistolae omnes*; and Casaubon, *Epistolae*.

<sup>29</sup> See *Abraham Ortelii et virorum eruditorum*, ed. by Hessels; Plantin, *Correspondance*, ed. by Rooses, Denucé, and Van Durme; Hunger, *Charles de l'Escluse*; and Dávila Pérez, *Benito Arias Montano*.

<sup>30</sup> They include a considerable number of the letters published either in the *Centuriae* or in Petrus Burmannus's *Sylloges epistolarum*.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, MS Lips. 3(24) is out of place in this series, since it contains mostly original letters addressed to Lipsius, entirely in verse, or pieces of poetry only, which have been separated from their covering letters.

<sup>32</sup> In the later issues of the *Centuriae* translations of Greek quotations or words were always

mistakes, or slightly adjusted the phrasing. Comparing these letters in manuscript with their printed versions (or for the first two hundred letters, copies published in the Protestant North with reissues made by Moretus in Antwerp) it becomes clear that substantial changes or omissions were rare, although some of his Jesuit friends repeatedly suggested that he should leave out at least *quaedam nomina nigra* (some black names), as it was phrased, a suggestion provoking the indignation of Balthasar Moretus, who from 1595 on became his father's right-hand man in the *Officina*:

Many readers will probably find it absurd to omit the names in the Letters; it would be more appropriate to indicate them with an asterisk or a similar mark and the Censor could explain the reason for this mark in his *approbatio* adding some smoothing words, for instance that they are virtuous and responsible men, only slightly deviating from the path of true religion.<sup>33</sup>

The secretaries' hands are not much of a problem, but Lipsius's autographs are more difficult to read, especially in the copies he jotted down himself,<sup>34</sup> or even worse, in his drafts. One Spanish correspondent even adds a *postscriptum* to his answer, politely suggesting that the learned man might ask someone else to write his answer for him:

Tu, mi Lipsi, si Dominico rescripseris (omnino rescribendum puto homini iudici, probo, docto et amanti), utere aliena manu, nam imperitiae n[ost]rae chyrographum tuum non facile negotium exhibuit.<sup>35</sup>

Lipsius was well aware of the problem his scribbles might cause, hence when he addressed an appeal to Archduke Albrecht of Austria, the governor of the Southern Low Countries, to mediate and have King Philip II grant him a general privilege for the printing of his works at the example of Emperor Rudolph II, he

courteously added, to help an interested reader who did not know the language.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *ILE*, [xi], 98 12 11: 'Nomina in EPISTOLIS tolli absurdum plurimis videatur; asterisco aut alia quaedam nota significari magis debeat et causam notae cum gratia aliqua Censor in ipsa approbatione explicet: doctrina et probitate illustres viros esse sed verae fidei lumen tantum deesse.'

<sup>34</sup> This is especially the case with a number of letters from MS Lips. 3(8), which are all copies or originals in his own hand, and MS Lips. 3(10) and 3(12), written mostly by secretaries, but occasionally also by himself.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *ILE*, [xv], 02 12 01 L (from Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola): 'But you, my dear Lipsius, if you return an answer to Dominicus (and I really think that you should do that to a man who is a lawyer, pious, learned and loving), do it through someone else's hand, for our inexperience makes your autograph not easy to cope with' [*Dominico* refers to another humanist from Zaragoza, who had been recommended by De Argensola].

thought it better to have the letter neatly written by his secretary and only added the closing formula, *Ser[enissi]mae Cels[itudinis] Tuae humilis et devotus servus*.<sup>36</sup> On another occasion he apologized to his Jesuit friend Martinus Antonius Delrio for having to cancel his promised visit to Liège: 'Causa altera quae me tenet, editio libellorum de Cruce. Attendere correctioni debebimus, quia non nimis belle aut composite scriptum (ita soleo) nostrum exemplar'.<sup>37</sup> Delrio understood the emergency: 'Vix pro tua dignitate te absente vulgabuntur, praesertim si autographa'.<sup>38</sup> In the secretarial copies too, one can see that whenever a new *amanuensis* took over, he needed some time to get used to the master's hand. Lipsius always had to correct the text and usually even to complete some blank spaces in the first letters copied by such neophytes.<sup>39</sup>

For the sake of completeness it should be added that a small number of letters exists in draft, as is the case with part of the correspondence from the *Officina Plantiniana* or from one of Lipsius's patrons, the Antwerp bishop Laevinus Torrentius. Others have been copied by a third party in order to have them circulate in a wider circle of colleagues and friends, or by an interested scholar some decades later. Thus, some of the contacts between Lipsius and scholars of the University of Bologna in the course of 1595 were transcribed up to five times: two personal copies in Leiden, two versions in Italy (Bologna and/or Milan), and another one in Paris.<sup>40</sup>

## 2. Some Material Aspects

With the exception of two letters written in Greek the whole body of Erasmus's correspondence was written in Latin, albeit often interlaced with words, quotations or proverbs in Greek.<sup>41</sup> In Lipsius's case too, the greater part of the

<sup>36</sup> See *ILE*, [IX], 96 12 15 A. The original was recently recovered in Brussels, Royal Archives, Audience 1855/2, so that the undated copy of the letter, preserved as Leiden, University Library, MS Lips. 3(18), f. 79<sup>v</sup>, no. 186 could be completed and Gerlo and Vervliet, *Inventaire de la correspondance de Juste Lipse* corrected (they had listed the letter on 1 December, viz. *ILE*, [IX], 96 12 01 AL).

<sup>37</sup> *ILE*, VI, 93 06 14 DE, 13–15.

<sup>38</sup> *ILE*, VI, 93 06 28, 22–23: 'They will hardly be published in a manner appropriate to your fame unless you are there, particularly if they are written in your own hand'.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, *ILE*, VI, [93] 10 19 H.

<sup>40</sup> Other examples can be found, e.g. in Leeuwarden, Utrecht, or London.

<sup>41</sup> The letters in Greek are Allen v, Epp. 1439 and 1446, written by Guillaume Budé,

letters — about ninety-five per cent — were written in Latin, and in true humanist tradition, corresponding to Erasmus's example and his own recommendations in his *Epistolica institutio*, a number of them were interwoven with Greek idioms and quotations. There is also one example of a letter written entirely in Greek, viz. from Cyrillus Lucaris, Patriarch of Alexandria.<sup>42</sup>

Lipsius's correspondence, however, also contains a limited number of letters written in vernacular languages. The Royal Archive in Brussels, for instance, preserves about a hundred business-like letters written in Dutch to his nephew by marriage, Jan de Greve, who occupied himself with Lipsius's estate from 1592 on, the year he married the latter's niece, Francisca Back. Another important series of letters in Lipsius's native language was addressed to him by Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, who became one of his most vehement opponents in his criticism of the *Politica* (Leiden: Raphelengius, 1589).<sup>43</sup> Coornhert deliberately wrote his attacks in Dutch, to involve a larger audience, whereas Lipsius answered in Latin. Other correspondents expressed themselves in French, as did Cornelis Aerssens, who had fled the Southern Low Countries because of religious reasons and who became secretary to the States General, or Pierre de Brach, a lawyer from Bordeaux, who wrote some mournful letters about the death of his wife and of his friend and protector Michel de Montaigne.<sup>44</sup> In all these cases Lipsius answered in Latin. Whereas Lipsius and Balthasar Moretus always addressed each other in Latin — he had been his *contubernalis* during the four months he studied at Leuven University — the major part of the correspondence with his father, Johannes, was in French. Time and again they wrote in Latin as well and in some letters they even switched from one language to the other in the middle of a letter, for no obvious reason.<sup>45</sup>

who made liberal use of Greek sentences in his other correspondence as well. See Heesakkers, 'Erasmus Epistolographus', p. 31; in footnote 2 he also mentions one letter, Allen III, Ep. 939, which was accompanied by a translation in German.

<sup>42</sup> Scil., *ILE*, XIV, 01 01 30. Lipsius answered in Latin, albeit with numerous phrases in Greek, see *ILE*, XIV, 01 04 17 L.

<sup>43</sup> On this subject, see Güldner, *Das Toleranz-Problem in den Niederlanden*, pp. 65–128; Nave, 'De polemiek tussen Justus Lipsius'; Bongers, *Leven en werk van D. V. Coornhert*; Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics*, pp. 109–18.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ILE*, III, 88 07 06 and *ILE*, VI, 93 02 04 respectively. The three preserved letters he wrote to Montaigne are in Latin as well (cf. *ILE*, III, 88 04 15; [88] 08 30 M; [89] 09 17); possible answers from Montaigne are not preserved.

<sup>45</sup> On the correspondence between Lipsius and Moretus, cf. Béné, 'Juste Lipse à travers sa correspondance conservée au Musée Plantin-Moretus'. Johannes Moretus was undoubtedly a less talented Latinist than his son. Their 'discussions' by letter often deal with financial matters, and time and again Lipsius urges his friend to be discreet.

Occasionally Lipsius received a letter in Italian,<sup>46</sup> but although he apparently understood the language well enough, he did not venture to write it himself, as he apologized to one of his correspondents.<sup>47</sup>

Both Erasmus and Lipsius have only seven women within the long list of their correspondents; Lipsius wrote his letters to such *grandes dames* as Dorothea-Susanna, the widow of Duke John-William I of Saxony (2) and Archduchess Isabella of Austria (2) in Latin,<sup>48</sup> as well as his answers to Marie de Gournay, Montaigne's *fille d'alliance* (spiritual foster daughter), who looked after the definitive redaction of the *Essais*, and who was an autodidact in Latin and Greek.<sup>49</sup> De Gournay herself, as well as Marie de Brimeu, Princess of Chimay, wrote in French; Elizabeth van Zuylén, wife of one of Lipsius's dearest friends in Leiden, Janus Dousa, preferred Dutch. The letters to Lipsius's niece Francisca de Greve-Back and Martine Plantin, wife of Johannes Moretus, were also written in Dutch.<sup>50</sup>

It has already been pointed out in the introduction that both humanists did much travelling, especially during the first half of their lives, and that both were held in equal esteem by their learned colleagues throughout Europe. Consequently, they established an awe-inspiring network of correspondence with humanists and prominent men of Church and State throughout Christian Europe. In Lipsius's case this included correspondents from Cambridge and London, Hamburg and Emden, Riga, Lvov, Wrocław, Reva (Hungary), Venice, Bologna, Perugia, Rome, Naples, Valladolid, Salamanca, Madrid, Cádiz, and Lisbon, to name only the cit-

<sup>46</sup> See for instance *ILE*, VI, 93 04 17 sent by university librarian and editor Francesco Bolzetta, acting as an intermediary for the procurators of the University of Padua, who had invited Lipsius to teach at their university, or some of Cardinal Federico Borromeo's letters, written during the final years of Lipsius's life (*ILE*, [xviii], 04 12 12 B, [xviii], 05 07 09, and [xix], 06 04).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ILE*, [x], 97 06 03 L to Antonio de Lara, secretary of the Milanese city council: 'Nam Italici vestri idiomatis intellectus et usus etiam aliquis mihi est, sed non usque eo, ut fidam stilo apud vos (qui unum hoc agitis) usurpare'. Lipsius is evidently answering a (lost) letter in the vernacular.

<sup>48</sup> The letters to Archduchess Isabella of Austria, the daughter of King Philip II, were the dedicatory letters of Lipsius, *Diva Sichemiensis sive Aspricollis*, and Lipsius, *Dissertatiuncula apud Principes item C[aii] Plinii Panegyricus*, the latter dedicated to her husband, Archduke Albrecht, as well).

<sup>49</sup> On the contacts between Lipsius and Marie de Gournay, cf. De Landtsheer, 'Michel de Montaigne, Marie de Gournay and Justus Lipsius'.

<sup>50</sup> See *ILE*, IV, 91 08 08 B; 91 06 30 Z; VII, 94 03 29; and [xv], 02 09 08 P respectively.



ies furthest away on the four points of the compass.<sup>51</sup> Lipsius himself wrote most of his letters in Leiden and Leuven, but also during his stays in Rome (four letters in the course of 1569), Vienna (two letters in June 1572), Jena (twenty letters between November 1572 and March 1574), Cologne (three letters written in the summer of 1574), Overijse (eight letters between July 1575 and October 1576, but with an interruption when he was staying in Leuven for reasons of safety),<sup>52</sup> Spa (eighty-seven letters mostly written between 19 May and 27 June 1591,<sup>53</sup> and a few others during stays in June 1592 or July 1595), and Liège (173 between 30 June 1591 and 30 July 1592, with a few more during a brief stay in 1595), on stops when he was on his way to these places, or on occasional sojourns to Brussels, Antwerp or Tournai once he had settled definitively in the Southern Netherlands.

If one consults the index to the *Inventaire de la correspondance de Juste Lipse*, one might be struck by an impressive number of names referring to leaders of Church and State, such as Pope Paul V, Emperor Maximilian II, the future King Philip III, Archdukes Albrecht and Isabella, Cardinal Antoine Granvelle, etc. The mere use of the inventory might be misleading, though, because most of these prominent people did not have a real correspondence with Lipsius in the ordinary sense of the word — *Scriptum animi nuntium ad absentes aut quasi absentes* (a message of the mind to someone who is absent or regarded as absent), as it is defined in the second chapter of his *Epistolica institutio* — but only had one of his works dedicated to them.<sup>54</sup> In this respect, there is a considerable difference between Lipsius and Erasmus, who, apart from dedicating his works to people at the highest levels of society, did not hesitate to write an occasional letter to them as well. The major part of Lipsius's correspondence was addressed to colleagues and students or former students, for he was eager to keep in touch

<sup>51</sup> As only half of Lipsius's correspondence is yet available, it is not possible to give equally accurate numbers or details as in Heesakkers, 'Erasmus Epistolographus', pp. 31–32. It is, however, something to keep in mind for within a few years.

<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile I discovered three more unknown drafts from 1575 in Leiden, University Library, MS Lips. 17, which I will publish when I have deciphered them.

<sup>53</sup> Here too, the overlooked draft of a letter scribbled on the verso side of the address of an original letter from Lampsonius should be added to the list. I discovered it Leiden, University Library, MS Lips. 4 (L) and it has been inserted in its appropriate place as *ILE*, IV, c. 91 06 [10].

<sup>54</sup> There is an exception as to Pope Paul V: in this case not only the dedicatory letter of the edition of Seneca is preserved, both in print and in autograph, but also the covering letter — it was at the same time intended as a recommendation of Lipsius's favourite student, Philip Rubens (the brother of the famous painter) who presented the publication to the pope — and a friendly, but rather stereotyped, acknowledgement of the gift, written by a secretary. See respectively *ILE*, [xviii], 05 06 27, 05 09 24 P, and [xix], 06 01 07.

with them, expressing an interest both in their further studies or careers and in their private life. This was foremost the case with his *commensales* or *contubernales*, sons of friends or leading members of the public life, who had been living in his household for some time, and for whom he prescribed a special programme in addition to the lectures they had to attend.<sup>55</sup> However, other students could also count upon Lipsius's willingness to recommend them to his colleagues abroad. Thus many *testimonia* and letters of introduction have been preserved.<sup>56</sup> Erasmus's teaching, on the other hand, had been limited to his earlier years and almost exclusively to private students. Their career had been decided in advance since they were the noble heirs of rich and influential parents, and they did not have to fend for themselves and find a tenure at a University. Although he kept in touch with at least some of them, the gist of these letters is entirely different.

### 3. *The Contents of the Letters*

In this final part I want to examine and compare the main subjects of the letters in general, which in some ways implies comparing both scholars as well. First of all, both humanists had a prodigious knowledge of Latin, from pre- to post-classical times, including the Fathers of the Church, which might seem more evident in Erasmus's case as an editor of St Jerome, Augustine, and Hilary of Poitiers. Both were highly familiar with Greek as well, hence time and again the use of Greek words and quotations in their letters, or of Latin neologisms and transliterations, built on Greek idioms. In Lipsius's case it is clear that he only added some Greek in letters to correspondents who were well versed in that language.<sup>57</sup> Both humanists were equally familiar with pagan and early Christian literature, as we know from their publications, but also from innumerable allusions in their letters. Yet there are some important differences here. In Erasmus's days there were still many dark areas on the map of authors available in print (in an uncor-

<sup>55</sup> On these *contubernales*, see Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics*, pp. 14–51 and, more practically, Peeters, 'Le *contubernium* de Lipse à Louvain'.

<sup>56</sup> On the *testimonia* to recommend his students, cf. Morford, 'Lipsius' Letters of Recommendation'.

<sup>57</sup> Greek frequently occurs in the letters exchanged with, for instance Josephus Justus Scaliger, Isaac Casaubon or Frédéric Morel. It has already been pointed out that when these letters were incorporated in the *Centuriae*, Lipsius always courteously provided a Latin translation of the Greek in the margin from the 1601 editions onwards for readers whose knowledge of Greek was poor or non-existent.



rupted edition); the need of having Greek texts published in their original version or translated into Latin was even more pronounced. In the course of the sixteenth century, however, most ancient authors had been published, studied, emended, and annotated by two or three generations of scholars, who had also acquired a far better knowledge of Greek literature. Hence, while Erasmus was still able to publish some texts or translations for the first time in the early sixteenth century,<sup>58</sup> the humanists of Lipsius's time focused mainly on critical editions of these texts, as well as providing them with thorough commentaries.<sup>59</sup> In the earliest stage of his career Lipsius had published five collections suggesting emendations or explanations of obscure passages in numerous authors, one of them presented as (fictitious) letters, a type of work entirely absent in Erasmus's publications.<sup>60</sup> Because of this mastery of Latin language especially, and of ancient literature, a number of Lipsius's letters are strictly philological and consist of discussions of or advice on variant readings, cruces, emendations, or interpretations in the texts the correspondents were working on. His edition of Tacitus, with its progressively augmented commentary, encouraged some of his readers to send him their remarks: lists of variant readings found in manuscripts or early editions in their libraries, suggestions for further emendations, copies of epigraphic or numismatic sources to illustrate his commentary, requests for further elucidation [...]. In the 1580s and 1590s Lipsius composed a number of 'antiquarian' treatises, exhaustively dealing with certain aspects of life in Antiquity, corroborating his ideas with a plethora of references from Homer to Byzantine chronicles. The treatises on Roman warfare in particular he considered as a *fax historica*, part of a general introduction to Latin and Greek historiography.<sup>61</sup> Once again, in

<sup>58</sup> For instance of Euripides, Lucian, and Plutarch, not to mention his edition and new translation of the New Testament.

<sup>59</sup> This different way of approach is obvious if one compares Erasmus's and Lipsius's edition of Seneca. Moreover, to avoid a too long and too complicated commentary part, Lipsius had published a general introduction, *Manuductionis ad Stoicorum Philosophiae libri tres* and *Physiologiae Stoicorum libri tres*, in fact a systematic survey of the Stoa and its predecessors. Both came from the press at the same time, in March 1604, one year before the annotated edition of Seneca's philosophical works.

<sup>60</sup> They were reprinted as a whole by the *Officina Plantiniana* in 1585, under the title *Opera omnia quae ad Criticam spectant*, a clear indication that Lipsius had finished with that kind of work.

<sup>61</sup> In his 'antiquarian' works he focused on games with the *Saturnaliū libri* (1582) and *De amphitheatro* (1584), on crucifixion as a punishment in Antiquity with his *De cruce* (1593), the Roman army practice of warfare in *De militia* and its sequel the *Poliorcetica* (1595–96), or the greatness of Rome, the *Admiranda sive de magnitudine Romana* (1598).

a number of letters possible sources or the right interpretation of them are discussed. When checking the occurrence of such particular philological aspects in the correspondence of his illustrious predecessor, one can conclude that Erasmus often dealt with textual problems in his letters, but only seldom bothered about explaining obscure passages in literary texts down to the most minute detail. And of course, epigraphy and numismatics were scarcely out of the egg in his time.

On the other hand, since numerous of his publications consider the Bible (mostly the New Testament) or religious themes (editions, commentaries, and polemical works), he time and again discusses matters pertaining to religion, often implying some points of controversy as well. This religious aspect is entirely absent from Lipsius's correspondence and works. Hence when his *De constantia* appeared in 1584, Laevinus Torrentius, vicar of the Prince Bishop of Liège and future bishop of Antwerp, wrote him a long letter venting his disappointment that Lipsius had only used sources from Greek and Roman Antiquity while completely ignoring the Christian tradition, such as the book of Job, or the New Testament, or the countless examples to be found in the *Acta sanctorum* or in the Fathers.<sup>62</sup> This lack of patristic sources, in particular, did not mean that Lipsius was unfamiliar with those texts, but merely that he was unwilling to discuss or focus upon such themes. In his letters he occasionally used a typical expression or a quotation from the Old or New Testament, or of a Father; in his works he mainly called upon a wide range of patristic sources, often with emendations or annotations as well, to illustrate or to confirm his theories in the aforementioned *De cruce*, or in his commentary on Tacitus, and they blend in with quotations from pagan sources. But Lipsius was loath to voice any opinion on religious or ecclesiastical matters, because unlike Erasmus he had had no theological training at all, and also because the politico-religious climate of the late-sixteenth century was entirely different. Lipsius had been an eye-witness to the consequences of religious discord and fanaticism; hence he preferred to keep himself to the ideas expressed in book IV of his *Politica*, that there should be only one religion in a state, the one chosen by the ruler, although people could have their own ideas, but without publicizing them. When his *De cruce*, the first treatise he published after his return from Leiden, came from the press in January-February 1594, he swore to friends and acquaintances that it had to be considered a continuation of his 'antiquarian' treatises, without any theological presumption. Similarly, when he overtly chose the side of Rome by writing his treatises about the Holy Virgin

<sup>62</sup> See *ILE*, II, 84 04 05 T and Lipsius's answer, II, 84 05 06.

in Halle and Scherpenheuvel (Montaigu),<sup>63</sup> he kept stressing in his letters that his purpose had been to describe the history of the places, not to discuss miracles from a theological point of view, thus shielding himself against attacks from Protestant and Catholic sides. Despite this different attitude towards the use of religious issues in their correspondence, the letters of both Erasmus and Lipsius are manifest proof that they abhorred being involved in the quarrels of their times, be it religious or otherwise, but unfortunately they themselves were causing them, often unwittingly, because of their publications. Erasmus was inclined to reply and to refute, only provoking new attacks; Lipsius on the other hand preferred to keep silent and often also urged friends and colleagues not to reply in his name either.<sup>64</sup>

Besides the exchange of scholarly news, Lipsius also showed a keen interest in what was happening in the world, even in remote parts of Europe. Of course, Erasmus and his contacts informed each other on major events occurring in their surroundings, with particular attention to religious matters, but in Lipsius's case, this theme is far more marked and recurring. Time and again he asked his colleagues or the many diplomats among his acquaintances to keep him abreast of what was happening in their country, although after his return to Leuven he often warned his friends in the Northern Netherlands not to touch upon politics or religion. Occasionally the correspondence indicates that Lipsius also shared a kind of subscription to what is called 'les Gazettes', together with an Antwerp citizen. Thus we find letters dwelling at least partly upon the 'great war' in the Danube basin, where year after year the imperial troops and their allies were fighting off the sultan's armies; other letters are about the situation in Poland and

<sup>63</sup> Viz. the *Diva Virgo Hallensis* (1604) and *Diva Sichemiensis sive Aspricollis* (1605), respectively.

<sup>64</sup> A notorious exception is his reaction to Coornhert, *Proces vant Ketterdoden ende dwang der Conscientien*, a fierce attack on some chapters of book IV of Lipsius, *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri VI*. Lipsius countered this criticism in his Lipsius, *Adversus Dialogistam Liber de una Religione*, which was available a few weeks before Coornhert died. Hence when in the next years Johannes Domannus sharpened his pen because of some witty but denigrating remarks about Westphalia, or Henricus Stephanus openly criticized his typical style, Lipsius preferred not to react in print. In 1602 however, when someone, apparently the Heidelberg professor Hippolytus a Collibus, made Lipsius's edition of Tacitus the butt of his fierce invective — it was published under pseudonym as *Pompeii Lampugnani collatio notarum Iusti Lipsii in Cornelium Tacitum cum m[anuscripto] codice Mirandulano*, with a fake address, Bergamo, 1602 (other copies have 1600) — the Leuven humanist did not hesitate to launch an offensive: Lipsius, *Dispunctio notarum Mirandulani codicis*. Protestant attacks against Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*, were coped with in an appendix (one page) to Lipsius, *Diva Sichemiensis sive Aspricollis*.

the Baltic countries, still largely under Swedish influence, if not dominion. When in July 1601 Archduke Albert besieged Ostend, rather optimistically believing that it would take him only a few weeks to expel the army of Maurice of Nassau, the correspondence offers an almost weekly report about the (mis)fortunes of the campaign, the weather conditions, etc., information that matches quite closely the numerous eyewitness accounts. The letters, in particular of the Leuven period, are also a constant testimony of the moods, the laments, and the apprehensions of the population in the strife-torn Southern Netherlands ruled by an aloof and estranged monarch in remote Spain.

Another interesting and more specific aspect of Lipsius's letters, far less present in those of Erasmus, is his correspondence with his publishers, the *Officina Plantiniana*. Some two hundred letters exchanged with Christopher Plantin, his collaborators and future successors Franciscus Raphelengius sr. (in Leiden, from 1586 onwards) and Johannes Moretus (who took over the Antwerp branch after Plantin's death on 1 July 1589), and their sons are a clear proof of the friendly relations between the author and his printers. Moreover, they also provide the book historian with an interesting and rare source of the interaction between a printer and his (favourite) author.<sup>65</sup> We can follow Lipsius's concern about the implications of his departure from Leiden for Raphelengius, his worries about pirate editions, which might not only be a hazard for his scholarly reputation by their inaccuracies, but could also cause serious economical harm to his friends by their cheapness. Hence his attempts to acquire an imperial privilege to protect his future publications.<sup>66</sup> Some years later, when Balthasar Moretus had become his

<sup>65</sup> On this subject see De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius en Christoffel Plantijn'; De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius en zijn relatie met Johannes I Moretus'; and, more recently, De Landtsheer, 'An Author and his Printer'. I am well aware that the attitude of the printer's house towards Lipsius was rather an exception.

<sup>66</sup> It was requested by September 1591 and granted by Rudolph II in Prague on 1 August 1592. The author had to appoint a printer (in Lipsius's case always Johannes Moretus), acquiring the monopoly on printing the work within the Empire for a period of thirty years from the *editio princeps* (*intra triginta annos a prima singulorum librorum editione*). From the *De cruce* (1593–1594) onwards, Lipsius's first publication after his return to the Southern Netherlands, every work always ended with the full text of the imperial privilege, followed by its concession to Johannes Moretus and a caution against pirate editions, and, finally, the privilege of the king of Spain. On 15 December 1596 Lipsius addressed a letter to Archduke Albert of Austria, governor of the Southern Netherlands, to intercede with King Philip II to endow him with a similar privilege within the Spanish realm. On 14 February 1597 the king followed the emperor's example and granted a general privilege along the same conditions. See on this general privilege Tournoy and Deceulaer, 'Justus Lipsius and his Unfinished *Monita*'.

father's right hand and took care of the Latin correspondence with the authors, the letters became quite frequent and, together with some archival documents, allow us to follow the printing process of a work almost to the quire. Galleys were sent to Leuven and submitted to the author's approval; Balthasar repeatedly discussed trivial errors he had already noted and saw to adapting the pages of cross-references. The letters also offer an indication of how the Moretuses, taking good care of their stock, took the initiative of a reissue, always asking Lipsius whether he had some further *addenda et corrigenda* or whether he wanted some changes to possible illustrations or their subtitles. In a number of cases we know that the author was sent an (unillustrated) copy of a previous edition with extra-wide margins, so that he could easily add his indications for a next edition in the margin.<sup>67</sup> It also appears that Lipsius regularly went to Antwerp whenever a new title was ready for the press, to discuss practical matters, such as the layout, with Johannes Moretus. Once the work was available, Lipsius was given a number of free copies and he could also ask Moretus to take care of special bindings for illustrious patrons or for dispatching copies intended for friends in Antwerp or abroad. A number of letters also reveal that the humanist must have supported his friend by lending him some money, although the correspondence — always in French in this case — is very discreet on this subject.

Finally, the letters are also an inestimable source of information about the life and works of the authors. Four or five centuries later they allow us an insider's look into their learned projects, their ambitions and their frustrations, their travels, but also into their relations with friends and colleagues. An issue often touched upon by both scholars is their failing health. Erasmus was suffering from kidney stones and had a weak stomach, for which ailments he blamed the austere life at the Collège de Montaigu in Paris. Lipsius, on the other hand, was almost permanently complaining about infections of the respiratory passages — the dampness of Leiden and its windy climate did disagree with his constitution, but

<sup>67</sup> Several of these copies are still preserved: the Antwerp Plantin-Moretus Museum has annotated copies of *De amphitheatro* (1585<sup>2</sup>) and of the *Saturnalia* (1588<sup>3</sup>), shelfnrs A 1573 and R 14.6 respectively. It also preserves an *editio princeps* of the aforementioned edition of Seneca, which Lipsius corrected during the last months of his life (shelf nr R 26.4). Leiden, University Library has copies of the *Polioretica* (1596), *De Vesta et Vestalibus syntagma* (1603) and of several editions of the Tacitus (1574, 1581, both text and commentary, and 1585) either interfoliated, or with marginal annotations. On the *Polioretica* copy (shelf nr 765 B 17), see Peeters, 'Ontstaansgeschiedenis van Lipsius' *Polioretica*'; on the annotated copy of *De Vesta et Vestalibus*, see my contribution De Landtsheer, 'Justus Lipsius' *De Vesta et Vestalibus Syntagmata*'. The successive editions of Tacitus are discussed in De Landtsheer, 'Commentaries on Tacitus by Justus Lipsius'.

even afterwards, in Leuven, he was often afflicted by heavy colds and bronchitis — and he was often troubled by his liver as well, especially after a serious infection, which lasted from the autumn of 1584 until the spring of 1585. As we have seen, the copies faithfully copied out by his secretaries and now in the Ms. Lips. 3 collection in Leiden, or even the letters carefully preserved by generations of Moretuses, which are only exceptionally incorporated in the *Centuriae*, have the effect of making the extant correspondence of Lipsius more spontaneous, less confined and premeditated than that of Erasmus. A number of usually shorter letters offer an insider's look into the daily life of the scholar: his love for dogs and flowers, for instance, his interest in growing cauliflowers and cabbage, or the numerous parties he enjoyed with friends first in Holland and, from August 1592 onwards, during visits to Leuven or Antwerp.

It has already been pointed out that a considerable part of Lipsius's correspondence was addressed to (former) students. They did not forget their mentor either, but kept him informed of their whereabouts, their successes or disappointments, and discussed their plans with him. A touching example of this is the letter of farewell he received from Maurice of Nassau, hardly a month after William the Silent, his father, was murdered (d. 10 July 1584). After thanking Lipsius for his letter of condolence (unfortunately this is not preserved) and the melons that came with it, he expressed his regret. Besides grieving his father's death, he had also to interrupt his study in Leiden and could no longer enjoy Lipsius's lectures, which he considered a true privilege and which could have largely contributed to the development of his personality. During the summer he had read Sallust's *Catiline*, and with the help of his tutor [probably Simon Stevin] had devoted himself to the first lessons in geometry. 'But right now', he concluded, 'I will take up your *On Constancy*, to learn how amidst these unfortunate events I can act firmly against this pernicious rebellion within the Low Countries'.<sup>68</sup>

Time and again students asked their former tutor for advice, not only with regard to their future careers, but occasionally also about marriage. One young man even called upon him to act as an intermediary between himself and the uncle of his sweetheart, who was one of the leading men of the Southern Low Countries. Other letters are a proof of their appreciation and gratitude, proudly covering a new publication, or offering small gifts: a peony, some artichokes, a dog, or even (on two occasions!) a canary. In a number of cases Lipsius also kept in touch with his students' parents, reporting on their sons' progress, making suggestions about an appropriate study programme or a possible sojourn abroad,

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *ILE*, II, 84 08 29.



even warning them when their son was buying too many books. A good illustration of Lipsius's concern for young students, recommended to him by their parents, is the case of François Aerssens, the eldest son of Cornelis, who matriculated at Leiden University in September 1588. Lipsius advised the boy to practise his style and write a paper about drunkenness, thus combining philological exercise and an implicit warning against some of the less desirable features of student life. He even made suggestions about its composition: a first part should deal with alcohol abuse in general and the appalling appearance of drunks. In a second part François was to focus on the baleful consequences of drinking for one's physical and mental health, and for his reputation. After the holidays Lipsius sent another letter to the boy's father, counselling that he should practise his rhetorical skills in the *collegium oratorium*, which he was organizing for a limited group of students. When they met by hazard in a bookshop, where Aerssens was buying a stack of Greek text books, which Lipsius believed unnecessary for a law student, the zealous scholar promptly sent a letter to The Hague, warning the father that he should tighten the strings of his purse and not buy every single book his son hankered after, for the boy had already enough books for his age. Even after Lipsius had left Leiden, Cornelis Aerssens continued to inform him about his son's achievements.<sup>69</sup> Ten years after François had obtained his degree of licentiate in Law at the University of Caen, he gradually became involved in diplomacy at the French court and was asked to approach Lipsius about coming to France.<sup>70</sup>

### Conclusion

Prolific correspondences, such as those of Erasmus and Lipsius, undoubtedly offer an inexhaustible source of information about the life and works of the scholars themselves and about the age in which they lived. Especially, letters which were never intended for publication contribute to an even livelier and more intimate portrait of their author. Moreover, thanks to the extensive network they created and stimulated, they are important for the history of Humanism, material and intellectual, covering a period from the end of the fifteenth century until the beginning of the seventeenth. Both collections mirror the scholarly interests and occupations of their authors, men with an exceptional knowledge of Latin in par-

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *ILE*, III, 90 08 14, 90 08 30, 90 10 12 A, 90 11 03 (paraphrased), and several other letters in *ILE*, III–VI, index, s.v. 'Aerssens, Cornelis' or 'Franciscus', especially *ILE*, VI, 93 12 28 about François' sojourn in France.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *ILE*, [xvi], 03 02 12 A.

ticular, and of the literature of the ancients. Yet whereas the majority of Erasmus's letters were carefully assessed and published by himself, thus enhancing the intellectual portrait he wanted to present, hardly one quarter of Lipsius's letters was published or prepared for the press, and that in most cases without too many alterations or omissions by their author. Thanks to his secretaries, some conscientious executors, and a clever, visionary librarian, an extensive part of his epistolary activities, both the letters he received and the ones he wrote, is still extant now in Leiden, allowing a far more intimate and direct knowledge of the contacts between Lipsius, his friends and acquaintances than is offered by Erasmus.



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Section IV.  
Erasmus and his Spiritual Legacy





## THE SHAPING OF A GOSPEL: FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE PARAPHRASE ON LUKE

Jane E. Phillips

This paper is about the paraphrase of a single verse in Erasmus's *Paraphrase on Luke*. I begin with a confession. About twenty-five years ago I read through the *Paraphrase* for the first time. When I reached Chapter 24, corresponding to Chapter 24 in the Gospel, I expected that my reading was nearly at an end. After all, in the paraphrases on the other gospels, the concluding chapters had been amplified only modestly: the narrative proceeded smoothly to its end, according as each evangelist had described it.<sup>1</sup> So as I turned the pages of the *Paraphrase on Luke* in the *LB* edition, and began reading the story of the faithful women going to the empty tomb, going back to the city to report to the incredulous disciples, and Peter's subsequent visit to the tomb, I expected a rapid conclusion to my task. Instead there were twenty-one more columns of *LB* text. How could this be?

I soon found out: when, in the course of relating the experiences of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, Erasmus reached what is now verse 27 in this chapter — the one that says, 'Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures' (New Revised Standard Version) — our paraphrast put into Jesus's mouth a speech he called only

<sup>1</sup> One might say that in the *Paraphrase on Matthew* the words of Jesus's commission to the disciples had been drawn out to a considerable extent; but one would have to note also that most of the sheerly narrative parts of Matthew 28 had been, by Erasmian standards, scarcely at all expanded. Neither the paraphrasing of John 20–21 nor that of Mark 16 goes beyond a 'normal' degree of amplification that maintains the dramatic pace of the respective crucifixion-resurrection narratives.

‘selected parts of that blessed talk’ (*LB*, vii, 469B). The speech Erasmus inserted covers sixteen columns in *LB*, close to eight per cent of the entire *Paraphrase*. And here is the confession: on that first reading of the *Paraphrase*, after a look at what the speech contained, I skipped it.

Of course, this long, and to some tastes tedious, speech could not be skipped forever. In time it appeared, duly translated and annotated, in Volume 48 of the *Collected Works of Erasmus*, where, by the way, it constitutes thirty-five pages of a 278-page text.<sup>2</sup> Its looming presence shifts the weight of the *Paraphrase* considerably from what we read in Luke’s Gospel. What can be said about so drastic a rebalancing of the original? Granted, Erasmus does remark in one place that paraphrasing allows him to add something of his own to clarify the original author’s meaning.<sup>3</sup> I am reluctant to believe, however, that by the standard of this observation Luke 24. 27 called for quite so much clarification. How, then, does this very long invented speech accord with Erasmus’s overall retelling of this gospel? Does he establish a rhetorical or an interpretive thread or position that can account for so monstrous an addition?

A word of warning: the *Paraphrases* of the Gospels could give a narratologist fits. Erasmus paraphrases in the person of the original author of the text he is dealing with, here Luke, in what I will call his Luke-voice.<sup>4</sup> This Luke-voice not only narrates the course of the story in paraphrased and amplified form but also gives the reader paraphrased and usually amplified versions of all the speakers in the Gospel original, especially of Jesus. In the case of the paraphrase on Luke 24. 27, the Luke-voice gives us a Jesus-voice delivering a speech of which no word at all is quoted in the Gospel. I leave it to you to imagine the layers of audiences, ideal, fictive, and actual, that this fiction inside a fiction might be presuming.

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Luke 11–24*, trans. by Phillips, in *CWE* 48, 235–70. Auer, *Die vollkommene Frömmigkeit des Christen*, p. 144, says Erasmus in this passage goes ‘a bit too far’; Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, p. 74, comments on the excessive length and the excessively christological interpretation of the Old Testament, especially the prophets, in this excursus.

<sup>3</sup> Allen v, Ep. 1274. 35–36, dated 1522.

<sup>4</sup> See the dedicatory letter to the *Paraphrase on Matthew*, Allen v, Ep. 1255. 29–53. Erasmus regularly claims that in his *Paraphrases* he is never speaking in his own person about his own times but always maintaining the historical context of the original author. See, for instance, Allen v, Ep. 1381. 425–28, the dedicatory letter to the *Paraphrase on Luke*, and replies to some criticisms of the *Paraphrase: Supputationes*, *LB*, ix, 597C, 605E–606A, 613E–614A, 616A–B; *Declarationes ad censuras Lutetiae vulgatas*, *LB*, ix, 893E–F.

In an essay published in 2002 I tried to give some account of the speech and its possible sources and purposes.<sup>5</sup> Let me restate briefly what was said there: The speech may be classified as a declamation, a piece of display oratory in a persona not generally that of the writer. As far as I know, nothing in the patristic and medieval exegesis of this Gospel, whether commentary or sermon series, parallels its vast assemblage of biblical passages. Instead, the nearest comparisons are to be found in the apologetic literature of the early church, though the apologists tend to address audiences who are presumably either sceptical of or hostile to the gospel message. In general the apologetic literature draws on a common core of prophetic passages and typological interpretations of Old Testament material, though the number of passages and the intricacy of their interpretation vary greatly. The foundation is the set of passages from the Old Testament quoted in the New.<sup>6</sup> Two apologists in particular may have influenced Erasmus here, Tertullian and Cyprian. Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* is an attack on the heretic Marcion, in the manner of a prosecutor before a judge. Its third book reviews Old Testament prophecies to establish the Jewish expectation of a messiah, and its fourth book compares Jesus's words and deeds in the Marcionite gospel, which is a curtailed form of the Gospel of Luke, with the messianic prophecies. In a 1522 addition to the *Ratio verae theologiae* Erasmus had praised the fourth book of *Adversus Marcionem* for having elegantly demonstrated the correspondence between prophecy and Jesus's life.<sup>7</sup> Similarly Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum testimonia* (addressed to a believer whom he calls 'son') collects Old Testament messianic prophecies in its first book, followed by a second that focuses on how the New Testament Jesus is foretold literally or typologically in the Old. In 1519–20 Erasmus had edited the works of Cyprian for the Froben press. In 1521 Froben published the first printed edition of Tertullian, prepared by Erasmus's friend and colleague Beatus Rhenanus.<sup>8</sup> Like Books 3 and 4 of the *Adversus Marcionem* and like the *Ad Quirinum* our speech also falls into two divisions: the first reviews Old Testament prophecy, as suggested by the evangelist's own words, and the second compares Jesus's life as reported in the Gospels to the messianic signs and types of the Old Testament. Perhaps in 1523 as Erasmus prepared his third Gospel

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, 'On the Road to Emmaus'.

<sup>6</sup> Many modern Bibles include a representative selection of such corresponding passages as marginalia or 'concordances'. A particularly useful set can be found in *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, ed. by Nestle and others.

<sup>7</sup> *LB*, v, 91C–D; the date is assigned by Holborn, p. 209.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Allen iv, Epp. 1000 and 1232.

paraphrase, his recent attention to two important Latin apologists spurred him to try his own hand at an apologetic exercise in a similar vein.

This on the form and likely sources is all very well and good, and may be mostly true. In the same essay I tried to give an account of the presence of the speech in the *Paraphrase*. I invoked a pedagogical purpose for the declamatory form, aimed at Christians in Erasmus's own day who were concerned about conversion of the Jews or, more nearly, about the conversion of the 'pharisaical' among their fellow Christians, which is widely seen as a primary goal of Erasmus's criticisms of 'Jewish' attitudes and behaviour.<sup>9</sup> But this explanation strikes me now as feeble; it is too small to account for the actual effect of the speech on the balance of the *Paraphrase*, unless we are to imagine a paraphrast run amok with the sheer joy of filling in what Luke had passed over in a sentence. Something remains to be said.

Let us begin with a closer look at the structure of the speech, as it may be modelled on, or inspired by, the works of Tertullian and Cyprian just mentioned. In the first half, the Old Testament part, Erasmus, like Luke, begins from Moses and the prophets. The Jesus-voice proceeds through a series of topics that characterize the old Hebrew religion. Each of these in turn is shown to be a mere foreshadowing in carnal and temporary terms of a spiritual reality that Moses himself and the Hebrew prophets (including the Psalmist) announce will supersede the old dispensation and surpass it in every respect: to replace Moses and the old fear-based law there will be a new lawgiver and a law of love, a spiritual Jerusalem with a new temple and a new Mount Zion, the replacement of the old priesthood and sacrifices by the priest without sin and his eucharistic sacrifice, and a new chosen people that will transcend time and space. Point by point, the prophecies are shown to be fulfilled in Jesus's words and actions during his teaching ministry, or supplemented by his own prophecies and promises about the end of his earthly life and its aftermath, drawn from all four Gospels (*CWE* 48, 235–48).

This first part blends into a short transitional section that calls upon the two listening disciples to understand that their beloved teacher, the lowly and mild Jesus, executed as a public offender, is the promised messiah. They are to reach this conclusion by comparing what they know or have heard from other eyewitnesses about Jesus's words and deeds with the scriptural prophecies just rehearsed, and also with a further set of prophecies that anticipate particular incidents in his personal history (*CWE* 48, 248–51).

In fact, however, the second half of our speech treats only two main periods in Jesus's life: that is, first, the conception and infancy stories up to John's preaching

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, 'On the Road to Emmaus', pp. 79–80.

and the baptism of Jesus, ending with a mere handful of general remarks on his use of parables, his miracles, and the hostility of the Jewish leadership to his activities (*CWE* 48, 251–57). Then there is a much longer treatment of the events that brought his life to its tragic end (as the two listening disciples think): Jesus's arrest, interrogations, condemnation, mocking, crucifixion, and burial, and his prophesied and foreshadowed resurrection. Each of the particulars in these parts of his life story is placed in turn beside a wealth of Old Testament prophecy and Jesus's own prophetic sayings about his death and resurrection. The two halves of the New Testament part of the whole invented speech are united around the theme of the humility of Jesus — his lowly circumstances in both birth and death, his subjection to the hostile worldly powers that govern human life, and the spiritual might he wields through the weakness of his humanity (*CWE* 48, 257–69).

The whole speech ends with a last admonition to the listeners to draw the correct conclusion from the comparison between Scripture and what they have seen or learned about their teacher. Such evidence should lead them to trust that the promises about his resurrection and the prophesied future of the worldwide church will be also fulfilled (*CWE* 48, 269–70).

Erasmus's long exposition in detail of what the evangelist meant by his one-sentence summary of Jesus's remarks on this occasion almost leaves the reader with the impression that the invented speech is the end of this Gospel and the *Paraphrase*, but of course it is not. The narrative goes on briefly to the recognition of Jesus by the two disciples at Emmaus, their hasty return to Jerusalem, and the appearance of Jesus to the assembled disciples there, where he again expounded Scripture. Luke summarizes this second speech somewhat more fully than he does the one on the road to Emmaus, mentioning not just Moses and the prophets and psalms but also Jesus's suffering and resurrection, and he includes with it mention of the preaching mission assigned to the disciples, as well as the injunction to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of an additional source of power (24. 44–47).<sup>10</sup> The Gospel ends with his departure from them at Bethany. All of this is reported, and paraphrased 'normally', by Erasmus's Luke-voice. Yet in the overall balance of the *Paraphrase*, it is little more than a coda to our speech.

<sup>10</sup> When Erasmus comes to paraphrase 24. 44–47 he gives it only a 'normal' amount of expansion, less than two pages in *CWE* 48. We may find in this later passage another hint of a reason, besides the works of Tertullian and Cyprian already mentioned, for Erasmus's division of the invented speech into Old and New Testament halves, but especially for the comments scattered throughout both halves that direct the two disciples' attention to the world-wide evangelizing mission of Jesus's appointed successors, themselves and the other apostles and disciples.

It is the invented speech itself that is posed as the climax of the *Paraphrase*; but, as an exhortation to understanding the combination of scriptural prophecy and the disciples' own experience, the same speech also points directly forward to the second half of Luke's project, the story of the earliest days of the apostolic mission as reported in the Acts of the Apostles. On that long walk to Emmaus, and, the reader must suppose, again in the assembly of disciples in Jerusalem, the Jesus of the *Paraphrase* gave a living demonstration of the kind of preaching that Peter, Stephen, Philip, and Paul practise in the first half of Acts. Erasmus himself would have preferred to have Luke's Gospel followed immediately by Acts in the New Testament.<sup>11</sup> He did not make that change, but the fictive speech at the end of the Gospel *Paraphrase* does serve, for the disciples of the narrative and for its readers, as preparation for the sermons preached in the sequel to this Gospel.

Another point: the invented speech almost never loses sight of its immediate audience.<sup>12</sup> The two listeners (and by extension also the reading audiences) are continually exhorted by the Jesus-voice to recall, to consider, to compare, to reflect, to review — whether the focus is on Old Testament prophecy or on their own experience or knowledge from eyewitnesses of Jesus's life and teachings. The listeners are urged to picture the events they witnessed, to judge, to evaluate, to decide on the basis of evidence what they should believe is the truth in the case of, or for, Jesus.<sup>13</sup> The speech thus amplifies a theme, one inherent in its Gospel source, of a certain kind of intellectual process on which an intellectual decision in favour of faith can and should be made. In the speech, unsurprisingly, the comparison with prophetic texts, and the stress on application of personal knowledge gained as eyewitnesses and participants or from reliable oral sources, are cast in a hortatory mode. Such a methodology appears often in the mouth of Jesus himself in the Gospels. His audiences at various times are urged to apply the kinds of judgments they make in their everyday experiences: to consider the lilies and the ravens, the fig tree in season, the evening sky (Matthew 6. 28, Luke 12. 24 and 27; Luke 21. 29–31; Matthew 16. 2–3, Luke 12. 54–56); they are reminded of texts that they know but whose broader implications they have missed or whose injunctions are now superseded (Matthew 5. 21–43); they have prophecies and

<sup>11</sup> See the annotation on *acta apostolorum* (on Acts 1. 1), Erasmus, *Annotations on the New Testament*, ed. by Reeve, p. 271.

<sup>12</sup> The one exception: *vide* in *LB*, vii, 481E (*CWE* 48, 263 and n. 114); but it is just a slip to another level of audience, and soon followed by a resumed address to the two disciples.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, the second-person plural verb forms, indicative and imperative, at *LB*, vii, 469F, 470B, 470C–D, 470E (*CWE* 48, 237–38). The pattern continues throughout the speech.

laws recalled and interpreted for them (Matthew 11. 10–15, Luke 4. 16–21, Matthew 22. 34–39, Luke 10. 25–37).

But these same procedures, when exercised in investigative modes aimed at constructing narrative, are also the typical themes of the ancient historian.<sup>14</sup> In fact, they are also the themes of the historian evangelist himself, in the prologue to this gospel, Luke 1. 1–4, and elaborated in Erasmus's paraphrase on those verses. Let us consider the methodology as it is invoked in the paraphrased prologue and in Erasmus's fictitious speech.

Already in his *Annotations* on this prologue Erasmus had repeated Ambrose's remarks on the 'historical style' of the Lucan Gospel. But Ambrose, as Erasmus says, emphasized arrangement more than other qualities of historiography.<sup>15</sup> Erasmus turns his rewriting of Luke's first four verses into a fairly extensive essay (*LB*, VII, 279A–283A, almost two and a half columns), beginning with remarks on historical credibility in general, but dwelling especially on the credibility of his Luke-voice. His preferred term here for credibility, or trustworthiness, or reliability, and also for the audience's assurance of a writer's veracity, is *fides*, a word of considerable resonance in Erasmus's world-view. The Luke-voice opens by weighing the relative merits of the knowledge of human history and gospel history on good classical grounds — pleasure and utility — and by finding the one kind of history useful but hardly essential, while the other is utterly necessary for salvation.<sup>16</sup> In elaborating the assertion of *fides* that the evangelist had sug-

<sup>14</sup> To mention only the most obvious classical precedents, both Herodotus and Thucydides are famous, or infamous, for using personal informants and their own experiences as documentation for the information they report. Cf. for instance Herodotus I. 1–5, II. 3 and 123, VII. 152; Thucydides I. 22. Caesar, Sallust, Tacitus, and Josephus also write histories of events for which they have first-hand knowledge or information from participants. Cf. Jacques Chomarat's remarks on the influence of classical historiography on the *Paraphrases* (though he is not concerned with questions of sources and methods of historical thinking), Chomarat, II, 629–31.

<sup>15</sup> See the annotation on *ordinare narrationem* (on Acts 1. 1) in Erasmus, *Annotations on the New Testament*, ed. by Reeve, p. 149, citing Ambrose, *Expositio in Lucam*, prol. 4 and 7, cols 1609B and 1611B.

<sup>16</sup> Erasmus's opening sentence: 'In humanis historiis, quoniam ex cognitione rerum non mediocris capitur vel voluptas vel utilitas, in primis requiri solet narrationis fides. Sed hanc multo magis esse oportet in Evangelica narratione, quae non solum adfert oblectationem animi vacui, aut utilitatem ad vitam hanc temporariam, verum etiam necessaria est ad veram pietatem, sine quo nemo consequitur aeternam salutem, vitaeque immortalis numquam interitum felicitatem' ('Since in human histories no little pleasure or usefulness is gotten from a knowledge of events, the first requirement is generally trustworthiness in narrative. But this quality ought much more to be present in a gospel narrative, for it provides not just entertainment for an idle



gested, Erasmus's Luke-voice claims to supplement, not supplant, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark; he has gathered unrecorded information from first-hand oral accounts of Jesus's disciples as to what they saw and heard, or, in the case of things of which they could have no direct knowledge, had themselves learned from other reliable witnesses, and the events in which they themselves took some part while they were in Jesus's company. He also defends the practice of writing down such accounts of Jesus's life, in order to hand on the tradition in a way less subject to careless error or deliberate falsification than word of mouth, and indeed to replace the living witnesses in places and times they can never reach. But carelessness, over-enthusiastic fictionalizing, and deliberate falsification can occur in either medium; hence, the Luke-voice says, he has been at pains to exclude lies and rumours, and to include facts that while passed over by the other evangelists can be verified from accounts of the participants in them. Finally, the Luke-voice's own *fides* (this time ambivalently meaning both the credibility of his account and his personal faith in Christ) is the product of his direct witness of the apostles' ongoing fulfilment of Jesus's commission and promises by their own miracles and preaching. So, as the disciples saw the prophecies of old fulfilled in the life of Jesus, the Luke-voice and his contemporaries can see Jesus's own prophecies about the future in process of fulfilment. Therefore belief or confidence (*fides*) in the rest of what he promised about individual and general salvation is confirmed.<sup>17</sup> The introductory essay ends in a detailed description of the contents of both volumes, the present one and the

mind or usefulness for this transient life, but is in fact necessary for the true godliness without which no one attains eternal salvation or the undying bliss of life everlasting'; my translation). Neither the Greek nor the Latin text of Luke actually uses an equivalent for credibility in these four verses. The paraphrase of them uses forms of *fides* fifteen times, along with a sprinkling of cognates and synonyms. Erasmus famously specified *fides et eruditio* as requirements of the historian in Allen I, Ep. 45. 45–56 (1495). He praised the study of history that is produced *bona fide* in Allen II, Ep. 586. 14 and 19 (1517), the preface to his edition of Suetonius.

<sup>17</sup> The theme of *fides*, embracing a range of meanings from 'credibility' through 'assurance' to 'faith', is redeployed in the paraphrase of the introduction to Acts, *LB*, VII, 661A–B: 'Ac primum modis omnibus erat confirmanda fides eorum, per quos decreverat admirabilium gestorum cunctis mortalibus fidem fieri' ('First, however, it was necessary to confirm in every possible way the faith of those who, according to his purpose, should furnish for all mortals the evidence of his wonderful deeds'. Translation from Erasmus, *Paraphrase on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. by Sider, in *CWE* 50, 6. In 1527 Erasmus added an essay on the meaning of *fides* and *fiducia* (Rom. 1. 17) to his *Annotations* on Romans: Erasmus, *Annotations on the New Testament*, ed. by Reeve, pp. 345–46; Erasmus, *Annotations on Romans*, trans. by Payne, in *CWE* 56, 42–44.



one that will continue the story on the same compositional principles, to be addressed to Theophilus and all future readers who, like him, are desirous of the eternal truths of God.

From Erasmus's point of view, then — not that he is unique in this regard — the methods of the evangelist historian in composing a narrative and those of a seeker for truth of the kind that the Jesus-voice exhorts his listeners to be are very similar: both must draw on personal experience and that of reliable witnesses, comparing what they know with what they have been told or have heard in Scripture, to determine an accurate version of the story, one in which they may have confidence, *fides*. The story, Luke's own version or that of the Jesus-voice in our speech, is more than narrative plain and simple. It is useful, it has a moral and spiritual meaning. The aim is to produce *fides* in the promises of the story's divine actor.

Perhaps we may view the *Paraphrase on Luke* as tripartite: it consists of a central core of biography bracketed by the essay on *fides* in historical narrative, in the paraphrase on Luke 1. 1–4, and by our speech paraphrasing Luke 24. 27, the fictive performance of a gospel teacher, a working evangelist, constructed from the Hebrew scriptures and material from the gospels. The biographical narrative, Jesus's birth and childhood (framed by the story of the Baptist), his ministry, and his final days, are the core, indeed, of the *Paraphrase* as of the Gospel. But the paraphrased prologue elaborates the method the Luke-voice has employed to authenticate that narrative and establish its credibility; and then, after the biography in a human sense is concluded, our long speech constitutes a third major section, one that, instead of merely narrating the post-resurrection events, centres on an extended argument for this culmination of Jesus's human life and its implications in the divine plan for the ages to come. This is not, I need hardly say, the structure of the Gospel itself.

In Erasmus's work before the Gospel *Paraphrases* there is at least one notable analogy to the structure I propose. His *Life of Jerome* of 1516, much admired as a piece of historiographical writing, is also divided into three similar parts. The first is a methodological manifesto that begins with a largely negative assessment of the lives of Jerome in the medieval hagiographic tradition, which Erasmus impeaches for consisting mostly of invented stories that gloss over their subject's human faults or astonish the credulous with tales of post-mortem miracles, in the process showing respect for neither the truly marvellous accomplishments of Jerome nor the intellectual capacities of their audiences. The plain truth, Erasmus says, is vivid enough to convey the exemplary and devotional impact of a holy life; and if an author is perhaps to be permitted to invent anything, his invention should adhere strictly to Christ's teachings, so as to give true form and

shape to an instance of Christian godliness.<sup>18</sup> Erasmus declares that he, uniquely, will use the evidence of Jerome's own writings and the records left by Jerome's contemporaries to reconstruct a narrative of the saint's life. Here he invokes the same criterion as in his elaboration of Luke's prologue, *fides*, credibility of the author or confidence of the reader, the specific thing, he says, chiefly required in a writer of history.<sup>19</sup> Seven years before the *Paraphrase on Luke*, he marks out as authentic historical sources what can be learned from his subject's own writings and those of others who knew him personally, and rejects the misguided or downright deceptive accretions of later writers.<sup>20</sup>

The second section is the biographical record properly speaking. Then, after recounting Jerome's life, Erasmus ends with a lengthy defence of the saint that includes an account of the honour in which he was held during his lifetime and an extended rebuttal of misunderstandings about Jerome's personal sanctity and his qualities as a scholar and theologian.<sup>21</sup>

If we compare the *Life of Jerome* with the reshaped life of Jesus as told by Erasmus in Luke's voice, we can see in both the same claim for historical *fides* based on dismissal of unverifiable storytelling combined with reliance on knowledgeable informants. The *Life of Jerome* devotes more attention to the negative side, the falsifiers, and less to historical *fides* directly. In Jesus's case there are no writings from his own hand; but there are the authentic apostolic records of his life and teachings in an oral tradition still living (at least from the point of view of the fictional Luke-voice) and preserved by not one but four evangelists, who took it upon themselves to protect it by writing it down. The central sections of the *Life of Jerome* and of the Lucan Gospel tell the story of a holy life. The closing section in the *Life of Jerome* is a defence, an apologia, against Jerome's detractors, made in Erasmus's own voice; its purpose is to rehabilitate the saint and re-establish his sanctity on what Erasmus holds to be authentic grounds. In a few words the author of the Gospel reports the occurrence of a similar apologia, which reappears in the *Paraphrase* as our remarkable inserted speech; but this is an apologia in self-defence, in the fictionalized voice of a divine defendant. It is revelatory rather than rehabilitative; and it is literally and morally instructive at every level of the narrative: the Gospel original addressed to Theophilus, the fictionalized

<sup>18</sup> Erasmus, *Hieronymi Vita*, ll. 1–135, Ferguson, pp. 134–39.

<sup>19</sup> Erasmus, *Hieronymi Vita*, l. 117, Ferguson; also ll. 126–27 (*fidelius*) and 128.

<sup>20</sup> Erasmus, *Hieronymi Vita*, ll. 120–35, Ferguson.

<sup>21</sup> Erasmus, *Hieronymi Vita*, ll. 136–994, Ferguson for the biography itself, ll. 995–1565 for the defence.

audiences of Erasmus's Luke-voice, and the world of Erasmus's own sixteenth-century audience. These differences are hardly surprising, given that Erasmus is dealing with human tradition in the one case and Holy Scripture in the other; and they are differences of degree, not kind. Still, the *Life of Jerome* offers a rhetorical analogue for the recast life of Jesus that is Erasmus's *Paraphrase on Luke*.

The *Life of Jerome* has a well-established reputation for advancing particular concerns of Erasmus himself: the foundation of theology in Scripture, the proper methodology for conducting biblical scholarship, a humanist agenda for the study of Greek and Latin literature, and the very picture of the biblical scholar's life as a holy one. Erasmus felt a long-standing affinity with Jerome, and in the *Life* he seems to represent Jerome as his own exemplar.<sup>22</sup> If the various holders of this view are correct, and I believe that taken together they are, then perhaps we may say that Erasmus's Luke-voice in the *Paraphrase*, not just in the biography proper but particularly in the paraphrased preface and even more in this long invented speech, also appears to be a student of Scripture in the mould of a Jerome and an Erasmus. In the speech the Luke-voice shows us Jesus himself practising a Christocentric approach to the Old Testament. We might even think that the speech offers a Jerome-like explication of its theme, for the Luke-voice puts into Jesus's mouth a defence of the proposition that Jesus's own prophecies and promises deserve credence, and bases it entirely on a close reading and interpretation of relevant Old Testament passages. As Erasmus reports of him, Jerome had spent his years in Bethlehem doing just such interpretive work.<sup>23</sup>

This view of our speech in the *Paraphrase*, and of the *Paraphrase* in consequence of our speech, blends with another: Erasmus's focus on the Jesus of the *Paraphrases* as above all a teacher, in the example he provides in his actions and especially in his words. The frequency with which the paraphrast draws out this pedagogical Jesus becomes wearisome to some; others find in it a flattened portrait of the incarnate deity's life as a human, subject to human emotions and limitations, modelled perhaps too much on Erasmus's own self-fashioning as a teacher

<sup>22</sup> This is a widely accepted view; I cite some representative writers: Ferguson, p. 125, quoting Preserved Smith, and p. 130; Chomarat, I, 180–82; Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, pp. 116, 132–36; Brady and Olin, 'Introduction', pp. xiii–xxiv; Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, pp. 55–82; Vessey, 'Erasmus' Jerome'.

<sup>23</sup> Erasmus, *Hieronymi Vita*, ll. 799ff. Ferguson, especially 821–24. In the *Ratio*, Erasmus says that Jerome seems likely to have used the same method of sorting passages under relevant headings that Erasmus had recommended in the *Copia* (*LB*, v, 130F–131A), and also praises Jerome's exegetical work for its rhetorical appeal (*LB*, v, 133E, with the 1523 addition given in Holborn, p. 296).

of rhetoric and projected into his reworking of the Gospels.<sup>24</sup> As mitigations to such views two observations are made: first, that the question is not whether Jesus's role in the Gospels is primarily instructional but what the content of that instruction is, and from this view Erasmus makes no separation between Jesus the teacher and Christ the redeemer, since redemption is the content of the teacher's instruction as well as of his final human act; and second, that we must be wary of defining selfhood or the relation of spiritual and intellectual realms in modern, secular terms rather than in those of Erasmus's own time.<sup>25</sup> Now our speech shows the readers not just a Jesus who is a Jerome-like student of Scripture, but also, entirely consistent with his portrait throughout the Gospels, Jesus in the act of teaching. He is, as I have already suggested, demonstrating how the disciples should teach when they go out into the world; he is teaching the teachers a biblical theology, instructing the future clergy, which is a topic of particular emphasis in the Gospel *Paraphrases*.<sup>26</sup> This too is part of Jerome's story, teaching the faith and the Scripture on which it is based, from his earliest years in Rome and all during his own studies in Bethlehem and elsewhere.

I do not want to take these comparisons too far. Leaving both Jerome and Erasmus the paraphrast aside, there is more than enough scriptural warrant for seeing Jesus as among other things a teacher. Not only Jerome was capable of compiling passages in defence of Jesus as the messiah promised to the Jews, for Tertullian and Cyprian both did the same. Yet Jerome was certainly Erasmus's ideal from his early years, and Erasmus seems to have modelled, and marketed, his own career on that of Jerome.<sup>27</sup> The *Paraphrases* themselves offer us Erasmus, the biblical scholar licensed by his New Testament text and *Annotations*, now reframing himself as a preacher of Scripture, an evangelist with a printing press for a pulpit. Still, it is enticing to see in the *Paraphrase on Luke* an atmosphere of Jerome, or of Erasmus's published account of Jerome, hovering about the paraphrast's Luke-voice constructing a Jesus-voice delivering an exegetical speech whose known content otherwise exists only in a single sentence.

<sup>24</sup> Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, pp. 67, 75, 132–34; Chomarat, II, 639–65, especially pp. 662–63.

<sup>25</sup> Auer, *Die vollkommene Frömmigkeit des Christen*, pp. 150–51; Vessey, 'Erasmus' Jerome', in general, but especially pp. 76–79 (in reference to Jerome) and 97–99.

<sup>26</sup> Chomarat, II, 643. See also Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung*, pp. 132–34, and Phillips, 'The Gospel, the Clergy, and the Laity'.

<sup>27</sup> See n. 22 above.

A final point. I have spoken of our speech as functioning to promote an intellectual project for pedagogical purposes beyond the boundaries of this Gospel. But familiarity with the sacred text has other goals too. In Erasmus's view of Christian spiritual formation, close scriptural study is important for all Christians of whatever intellectual capacity, for such study yields affective results that are at the heart of transformation into the wholly spiritual life.<sup>28</sup> In the *Ratio* he devotes a large part of his discussion to preparation for biblical preaching; the preacher must have a trained capacity to recognize the emotional force of Scripture so as to transmit that to his congregation (*LB*, v, 80E–83A). In the *Enchiridion* the addressee, a backsliding knight, is told that passionate study of Scripture is a weapon against the assaults of the enemy and makes grim adversity bearable; it is spiritual food and drink (*LB*, v, 6E–7D). In the *Paraclesis* Christ in Scripture is offered as a model of life, a remedy against spiritual ills, a spur against sloth, and a delight for the soul in the face of the troubles of mortal existence (*LB*, v, 142D–E). Perhaps the most telling elaboration for our purposes, however, is found in the preface 'Pio Lectori' to the *Paraphrase on Matthew*, where Erasmus argues for the affective utility of the study of Scripture for all degrees of Christians, in whatever hard circumstances they may find themselves: ignorance, perplexity, torment by any form of sickness of soul, temptation. I quote one part of his advice: 'Is someone grieving? Let him seek solace of his sorrow from [the Gospels], and depart in lighter spirits'.<sup>29</sup>

So let us come back to the setting of our speech in the drama of the Gospel, the *fabula*, that Erasmus has embellished. Luke's description of the speech places it at the conclusion of a gloomy conversation that began between the two disciples on their long walk to Emmaus, and continued with a stranger who joined them and inquired about the cause of their evident unhappiness (Luke 24. 13–23). Erasmus is at pains to elaborate the disciples' sorrowful emotion; he describes their behaviour as the common practice of bereaved persons who talk about the departed to keep memory fresh, and who ease the grief that totally absorbs them by pouring it out to anyone who will listen (*LB*, VII, 467B–F). In its dramatic context, I suggest, Erasmus develops our speech, this exegesis of the conjunction of Scripture and actuality in the revelation of the true messiah, as a speech of consolation. It is a model not just of preaching the Gospel to preachers-in-training, nor of the fruits of biblical scholarship, but also of the offering of effective, that is to say,

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Auer, *Die vollkommene Frömmigkeit des Christen*, p. 147. The subject has been recently revisited by Baker-Smith, 'Affectivity and Irenicism'.

<sup>29</sup> *LB*, VII, \*\*2<sup>v</sup>–\*\*3<sup>r</sup>, beginning at 'Quamquam in libris Evangelicis'.

affective solace and strength to the bereaved, from what Erasmus believes to be the primary resource for the Christian, active meditation on the sacred Word. We may have some different views of the effect of the speech on a reader, but Erasmus has Luke's assurance (24. 30–33) that its effect on the two disciples was indeed heartening, since it strengthened them to the point of recognizing Jesus while they were at supper, and sent them back to Jerusalem with lighter hearts.

So we have arrived at a fuller view of the paraphrase on Luke 24. 27, though doubtless more than this could still be said. Its form has been more closely described. The method it sets before its listeners of attaining *fides* in the words of their departed teacher has been connected to the method of achieving *fides* in a historical narrative. Its function as a preliminary to the second half of Luke's story has been proposed. The influence of Erasmus's patron saint and rehabilitated master in the field of biblical scholarship has been detected, however faintly, in its construction. And within the exegetical fiction of Gospel paraphrase a consolatory motive has been suggested for this bold invention.

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## ITALIAN HUMANIST PREDECESSORS OF ERASMUS'S *ENCOMIUM MATRIMONII* OF 1518

Letizia Panizza

The growth of a middle-class laity in Renaissance Italy was accompanied not only by greater literacy, the increase in number and status of professionals like lawyers and doctors and of a wealthy merchant class eager for learning, but also by the recovery and dissemination of classical Latin and Greek texts, and the comparison and contrast of these with traditional Christian teaching. The varied opinions of the ancient pagans and early Christians on matrimony and the relationship of husband and wife could not fail to arouse attention. Most people, after all, were married and raised families; and while respecting or at least tolerating the religious state in life that pronounced its own state more spiritually 'perfect' because celibate and bound by vows, they expressed a strong desire to affirm as well as enhance the moral and spiritual dignity of their own condition.

Some clergy in Italy, too, especially those with a classical education, were no less critical of exaggerated claims about the glory of virginity and ascetical renunciation over and against a married life in the world. The towering achievements of Erasmus of Rotterdam in this area, however, have tended to eclipse those of his Italian humanist predecessors. My purpose in this article is to trace what I see as Erasmus's connections with fifteenth-century Italian clerics and lay people who wrote on this matter; in particular, I wish to examine the hinterland of Erasmus's polemics in his *Encomium matrimonii*, printed in 1518, but composed almost twenty years earlier. Erasmus himself confessed that this encomium was a direct refutation of Jerome's anti-marriage diatribe. As a priest, Erasmus did not marry, but his close acquaintance with, for instance, the married humanist

Thomas More and his family gave him an exemplary model of Christian married life; and his unparalleled skills in rhetoric and philology gave him a distaste for rigid interpretations of texts.<sup>1</sup>

At the core of anti-marriage literature lay the Church Fathers, Greek and Latin; but for Latin Europe, the writings of Jerome and Augustine were paramount, and of the two, it was St Jerome who carried the palm. These anti-marriage writings, furthermore, all claimed support of the Bible, accepted as the word of God. Whether lay or cleric, European culture was saturated with biblical stories, images, and teachings. An anthropology sanctioned by God Himself, everyone believed, lay in Genesis, in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and in St Paul's Epistles. Genesis was more often than not read and interpreted through dark-coloured glasses. Woman was taken from Adam's side, and so a dependent creature; woman disobeyed God's command, and induced Adam to sin too; and woman was the cause of 'original sin' that resulted in physical death and moral ruin for the whole human race, by clouding the mind and weakening the will. Woman's punishment (a just one because established by divine command) was to be subject to her husband, to be ruled over by him, and to suffer in bearing children — although St Paul declared that it was by bearing children that she would achieve salvation. Given by God originally as an *adiutorium* ('helpmeet' or 'help') to Adam, Eve turned into her own husband's enemy, and made hostility between husband and wife a 'natural' state of affairs after the Fall.<sup>2</sup>

### *Jerome's Campaign against Marriage*

Jerome's most vehement writings against marriage, wives, and family life in favour of sexual renunciation are: first, his tracts against Christians favouring the

<sup>1</sup> For the critical edition see Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, ed. by Margolin. The introduction and the notes supply the reader with a complete historical/cultural context for the *Encomium*. English translation in *CWE* 25, 129–47, and notes in *CWE* 26, 528–34, ed. by Sowards. All quotations and English translations from these editions. Erasmus's Introductory Letter to his 1516 edition of Jerome makes several anti-ascetic points, including the questioning of virginity's value and usefulness to Christian life.

<sup>2</sup> On Erasmus and marriage, Telle, *Érasme de Rotterdam et le septième sacrement*. The studies of Hilmar M. Pabel dealing with Erasmus and Jerome have been particularly helpful. See Pabel, 'Reading Jerome in the Renaissance', Pabel, 'Exegesis and Marriage'. For a wide selection of marriage orations in Italy, see D'Elia, *The Renaissance of Marriage*. D'Elia has examined a large number of Latin orations still in manuscript. For Erasmus's editions of so many Fathers of the Church, see Backus, 'Erasmus and the Spirituality of the Early Church'.

equality of virginity and marriage, *Adversus Jovinianum* and *Contra Helvidium*; and second, letters to women followers from Rome who had settled with him in Palestine, such as Paula, Marcella, Julia Eustochium, and Furia, in which he urges them to mortification of the flesh, abstinence, prayer, perpetual virginity, and the study of Scripture. To understand why an intelligent, hard-working and civic-minded laity would find them opinionated if not insulting (as even some contemporary married Christians of Jerome's age did), and be prompted to challenge his sour mindset, I will begin by supplying evidence of his exaggerated opinions and distortions of classical and biblical sources.

The two books of *Adversus Jovinianum*, composed in AD 393, are a superb example of the rhetorical genre of invective or *vituperatio*, in which Jerome unleashes his rage against the 'Epicurean' Jovinianus (Jovinian), who dared to preach that marriage and virginity were equally meritorious states in life.<sup>3</sup> Book I is devoted entirely to the praise of virginity, and specifically to arguing that virginity is superior in merit to marriage, and even more natural. The Old and New Testaments, and most of all, St Paul, are called upon to testify to Jerome's interpretation. Piling up his arsenal of authorities, Jerome co-opted classical Greek and Latin sources that are no longer extant, and were thus difficult to refute until the Latin West had regained a classical scholarship equal to Jerome's own. They, too, 'proved' that the ancient world exalted virginity and disapproved of sexual passion. Some passages blatantly misrepresented the ancient world, giving it a quasi-Christian veneer. Reproaching widows who wish to re-marry and virgins who are thinking of marrying, Jerome commands them to learn from the Greek heathen. Look what the Greek philosopher, disciple of Aristotle, Theophrastus, said in his treatise *On Marriage*!<sup>4</sup> (Later, Jerome adds Aristotle and Plutarch and 'our Seneca' — meaning Latin Seneca as opposed to the other Greeks.) If pagans loved chastity, *a fortiori*, how much more should Christians? This ancient literary genre, *An uxor ducenda* ('Should a wise man marry?'), written from the man's point of view, was meant to dissuade philosophers and scholars from taking on the social and financial responsibilities of marriage, not to dissuade the 'wise man' from sex.

<sup>3</sup> Jerome was sent Jovinian's tracts from Rome, and asked 'to reply to the follies contained in them, and [...] crush with evangelical and apostolic vigour the Epicurus of Christianity'. (Book I. 1). See Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, trans. by Freemantle. For Latin, see Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, ed. by Migne. I shall refer to paragraph numbering, the same for English and Latin, and col. number in addition for the Latin.

<sup>4</sup> 'Fertur aureolus Theophrasti liber *De Nuptiis*, in quo quaerit an vir sapiens ducat uxorem' (Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I. 47, col. 289). ('A book *On Marriage*, worth its weight in gold, passes under the name of Theophrastus. In it the author asks whether a wise man should marry').

He should consider a concubine, a prostitute or a male lover as a less demanding substitute. Jerome, adamant about the incompatibility of family life and study, has Theophrastus conclude that:

Non est ergo uxor ducenda sapienti. Primum enim impediri studia philosophiae: nec posse quemquam libris et uxori pariter inservire. Multa esse quae matronarum usibus necessaria sint, pretiosae vestes, aurum, gemmae, sumptus, ancillae, supellex varia, lecticae et esseda deaureata. [...] illa ornatio, procedit in publicam, haec honoratur ab omnibus [...] Si doctissimus praeceptor in qualibet urbium fuerit, nec uxorem relinquere, nec cum sarcina ire possumus? (*Adversus Jovinianum*, I. 47, col. 289)

A wise man should not take a wife. For in the first place his study of philosophy will be hindered, and it is impossible for anyone to attend equally to his books and his wife. Matrons want many things: costly dresses, gold, jewels, great outlay, maid-servants, all kinds of furniture, litters, and gilded coaches [...] [she complains that] one lady goes out better dressed than she; that another is looked up to by all. [...] There may be in some neighbouring city the wisest of teachers; but if we have a wife we can neither leave her behind, nor take the burden with us.

In his rhetorical denigration of marriage, Christian Jerome reduces a wife, no matter how wealthy, intelligent or beautiful, to an unwanted object, a piece of valueless kitchenware that a husband cannot even try out before purchase:

Pauperem alere, difficile est; divitem ferre, tormentum. Adde quod nulla est uxoris electio, sed qualiscunque obvenerit, habenda. [...] Equus, asinus, bos, canis, et vilissima mancipia, vestes quoque, et lebetes, sedile ligneum, calix, et urceolus fictilis probantur prius, et sic emuntur: sola uxor non ostenditur, ne ante displiceat quam ducatur. (*Adversus Jovinianum*, I. 47, col. 289)

To support a poor wife is hard, to put up with a rich one is torture. Notice too, that in the case of a wife you cannot pick and choose: you must take her as you find her. [...] Horses, asses, cattle, even slaves of the smallest worth, clothes, kettles, wooden seats, cups, and earthenware pitchers, are first tried and then bought: it is only a wife that is not displayed — for fear she may be found displeasing before she is married.

The thought that a wife might like to try out a husband before marriage is never entertained in this exclusively male debate. A little-known author, Xystus (Sextus Pythagoreus), fuels Jerome's blurring of distinctions between honourable marriage and adultery, between a wife and a whore as he equates passion with lust and madness:

Nihil autem interest, quam ex honesta causa quis insaniat. Unde et Xystus in sententiis: Adulter est, inquit, in suam uxorem amator ardentior. In aliena quippe

uxore, omnis amor turpis est, in sua nimius. Sapiens vir iudicio debet amare conjugem, non affectu [...] Nihil est foedius quam uxorem amare quasi adulteram. (*Adversus Jovinianum*, I. 49, cols 293–94)

And it makes no difference how honourable is the cause of a man's insanity. Xystus in his *Sentences* tells us that 'He who too ardently loves his own wife is an adulterer'. It is disgraceful to love another man's wife at all, or one's own too much. A wise man ought to love his wife with judgment not with passion [...] There is nothing more shameful than to love a wife as if she were an adulteress.

An anonymous Roman and Herodotus the celebrated Greek historian are cited as authoritative sources for a couple of tasteless jokes about a husband suffering an apparently faultless wife as only he 'knows where the shoe pinches'; and about all women putting off their modesty with their clothes.<sup>5</sup>

Jerome bestows attention on a few Roman wives only because they are chaste, for 'Multa sunt, quae praeclara ingenia nobilitent. Mulieris virtus proprie pudicitia est' ('Many are the spheres ennobled by splendid [male] ability: the virtue of women is, in a special sense, chastity'; *Adversus Jovinianum*, I. 49, col. 294). Nothing else matters for her. Pride of place goes to the pagan suicide Lucretia. Though raped by Tarquin, she felt her chastity was compromised in the eyes of the world and resorted to the only 'proof' a woman can give of having withheld consent: taking her own life. Jerome reminds his readers that Lucretia did not wish to survive her violated chastity, but felt such deep guilt she needed to wipe out the stain upon her person with her own blood (*Adversus Jovinianum*, I. 46, col. 287). Even Jerome's contemporary, Augustine, challenged Jerome on this justification of suicide; but the Renaissance made of Lucretia a heroine and role-model for wives in literature and art.<sup>6</sup> In the invective against Helvidius, who taught that Mary did not remain a virgin and had other children by Joseph,

<sup>5</sup> 'Legimus quemdam apud Romanos nobilem [...] "Et hic soccus quem cernitis, videtur vobis novus et elegans; sed nemo scit praeter me ubi me premat". Scribit Herodotus quod mulier cum veste deponat et verecundiam'. (Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I. 48, col. 292). For Herodotus, see *History*, I. 8.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ad Romanas feminas transeam: et primam ponam Lucretiam, quae violatae pudicitiae nolens supervivere, maculam corporis cruore delevit'. A Roman wife who never reproached her husband for having foul breath is commended for her patience. Jerome praises Cato's younger daughter Marcia for not wishing to marry again, and finds it extraordinary that other Roman matrons, like Marcella, Valeria, and Annia were also happy with their husbands, and did not re-marry. Augustine, *City of God*, discusses suicide at length (I. 15–20), and devotes the longest chapter, 19, specifically to Lucretia. Whether she was chaste or guilty of consent, she should not have taken her life, he judges. For resonances of the Lucretia story in the Renaissance, see Jed, *Chaste Thinking*.

Jerome displays similar rage. Marriage and children are a curse. There is an inherent conflict between looking after a household and prayer, between loving a wife or husband and loving God. Responsibilities to family, community or the state do not matter in the drive for spiritual 'perfection'.<sup>7</sup>

In Book II, Jerome elaborated an interpretation of the parable of the sower who goes out to sow his seeds in diverse kinds of terrain: some fall by the wayside, some on stony ground, some among thorns, and some on fertile soil. In Christ's teaching, the seed that grows and increases on good soil, yielding variable harvests — thirtyfold, sixtyfold and hundredfold — refers to the word of God.<sup>8</sup> There is nothing to suggest that the parable is about virginity versus marriage. Yet Jerome's forcing of the text supplanted Christ's own. Total sexual renunciation — virginity — produces the hundredfold harvest. Marriage followed by renunciation — widowhood — produces the sixtyfold one, while marriage itself only a meagre thirtyfold. With the passing of centuries, this parable provided confirmation for male and female religious orders that their vows made them spiritually superior to married people, with the overtone that only those who had taken vows of chastity, poverty and obedience were truly religious.<sup>9</sup>

Turning from invective, Jerome assumes a didactic pose in his letters, also immensely popular in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Nevertheless, writing to one of his most loyal and saintly disciples, the wealthy virgin, Lady Julia Eustochium about AD 384, his all-consuming campaign for the preservation of virginity leads to theologically dubious, if not heretical, threats:

Audenter loquor: cum omnia Deus possit, suscitare virginem non potest post ruinam. Valet quidem liberare de poena, sed non valet coronare corruptam [...] Perit ergo et mente virginitas.

<sup>7</sup> Jerome was once again attacking the proposition that marriage could be equal to virginity. As late as the seventeenth century, this invective was used to persuade reluctant young girls to enter the convent.

<sup>8</sup> See Mark 4. 3–20; for Christ's explanation, 4. 20.

<sup>9</sup> For the contemporary context of the issue, see Brown, *The Body and Society*, pp. 366–86. Says Brown of this tract of Jerome's: 'It was a memorable statement of the ascetic viewpoint at its most unpleasant and impracticable', p. 377. A finer understanding of Jovinian would have to wait until the 15th and 16th centuries. On Jerome, see also Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies*, pp. 179–89 for the controversy with Jovinian; and Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, important for Jerome's reception among humanists and Catholic and Protestant reformers.

I speak boldly: God can do all things, [but] he cannot raise a virgin up after she has fallen. He is able to free a virgin from the penalty of her sin, but he refuses her the crown! Virginity[...] can be lost even by a thought.<sup>10</sup>

Compared to virginity, the pearl of great price, marriage is sordid if not degrading — another statement that borders on the heretical, and misconstrues Genesis for his own purpose. 'Non est detrahere nuptiis cum illis virginitatis antefertur. Nemo malum bono comparat' (Letter 22. 19, pp. 90–91) ('It is not disparaging wedlock to prefer virginity. No one can make a comparison between two things if one is good and the other evil').

Virginity belonged to Eve *before* the Fall; sexuality and marriage *after*. If Adam and Eve had not fallen, some way would have been found to fulfil God's command, 'Crescite et multiplicamini', (Genesis 1. 28) ('Increase and multiply'), other than intercourse and childbirth. And anyway, Jerome continues, the earth is now fully populated, and marriage finds a purpose only in producing virgins.<sup>11</sup>

The horrors of sexual intercourse are vividly set before another Roman lady, the widow Furia, to deter her from a second marriage. Sex is moral poison, she is reminded, fatal if not regurgitated. Here again, Jerome twists a quotation from Scripture to his own aim of sexual renunciation:

Amarissimam choleram tuae sensere fauces, egressisti acescentes et morbidos cibos, relevasti aestuantem stomachum: quid vis rursus ingerere, quod tibi noxium fuit? 'Canis reversus ad suum vomitum et sus lota in volutabro luti' [2 Peter 2. 22]. Bruta quoque animalia et vagae aves in easdam pedicas retiaque non incident. (Letter 54. 4)<sup>12</sup>

Your mouth has tasted the bitterest of gall; you have voided the sour unwholesome food; you have relieved a heaving stomach. Would you put into it again something which has already proved harmful to you? 'The dog is returned to his own vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire'. Even brutes and roving birds do not fall into the same snares or nets twice.

<sup>10</sup> Jerome, *Select Letters*, trans. by Wright, Letter 22, pp. 52–159 (5, p. 62).

<sup>11</sup> See Jerome, *Select Letters*, trans. by Wright, Letter 22. 19. In order to argue that in Paradise there was only virginity and no marriage, Jerome maintains incorrectly that the command to increase and multiply and fill the earth was given only *after* the Fall. But this is not so. The command is immediately after the creation of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 1. 26 and 27, and the following verse 28: 'Benedixitque illis Deus, et ait: crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram'). There is nothing in Genesis about virginity — as Erasmus and Curione will point out. English translations from the Douay version.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome, *Select Letters*, trans. by Wright, pp. 228–65 (4, p. 233).



In the quotation above, St Peter was not referring to second marriages, but to more serious lapses of newly baptized Christians into their old pagan ways. (Denunciation of marriage, full of nothing but trials and tribulations, is also the core of the invective against Helvidius, a married layman at Rome.) Jerome's views were shared by communities of Christians in the early church. With immense erudition Peter Brown has painted a lavishly detailed panorama showing how, for early Greek or Latin Fathers, salvation and eternal life could only be obtained by sexual renunciation. Spiritual perfection resided in men and especially women crushing bodily desires, so that 'true progeny came, not through physical intercourse, but through the preaching of the Gospel. The joys of physical parenthood were a pallid reflection of the truly fertile life of the virgin girls, gathered around their spiritual father'.<sup>13</sup> Human history itself was 'the story of the slow but sure taming of the raw sexual drive' that would but culminate in the triumph of virginal bodies, bridges between heaven and earth.<sup>14</sup>

### The Reception of Jerome's Ascetical Teachings: (1) The Middle Ages

Not surprisingly, Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* and Letters to his followers formed part of core spiritual reading in monasteries throughout Europe, whether male or female.<sup>15</sup> It seems that the revival of Jerome's tract owed much to the twelfth-century philosopher Abelard and his beloved, Heloise. In his confessional *Historia calamitatum mearum*, Abelard relates Heloise's arguments *against* their marrying, all of which are adapted from *Adversus Jovinianum*.<sup>16</sup> Abelard swallowed Jerome's mixture of ancient philosophers and Christian ascetics; as a philosopher himself, he felt a compulsion to renounce marriage for *philosophy*. Aspiring to be if not another Jerome, at least a philosopher like Seneca, Abelard would suffer a loss of dignity if he married.<sup>17</sup> The diatribe had effects on the theology of marriage as well: Peter Lombard, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas agreed with Jerome that sexual relations between husband and wife were sinful if they went beyond the minimum needed for procreation; that is, if there were pas-

<sup>13</sup> Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 185. Brown was discussing in particular the *Symposium* of the 3rd-century ascetic Methodius, a contemporary of Origen.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *The Body and Society*, pp. 185–86.

<sup>15</sup> Eighty-seven complete manuscript copies have been located, according to a survey published in 1969. See Silva and Brennan, 'Medieval Manuscripts of Jerome Against Jovinian'. The number of compilations and excerpts would be many more.

<sup>16</sup> See Delhay, 'Le Dossier anti-matrimonial de l'*Adversus Jovinianum* et son influence'.

<sup>17</sup> See *Correspondance*, ed. by Oberson; and Gilson, *Héloïse and Abélard*, p. 21.



sionate feelings.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the sections attributed by Jerome to Theophrastus and to Seneca were excerpted, expanded in separate anti-matrimony tracts, and diffused in medieval university contexts, where the readership was almost entirely male and clerical.<sup>19</sup>

## (2) Early and Fifteenth-Century Humanism

Histories of humanism and Latinity in the Renaissance usually begin with Petrarch (1304–1474), Boccaccio (1313–75), and Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), figures of the fourteenth century who show they knew *Adversus Jovinianum* well. They can be seen as transitional figures who revered the text uncritically for defending, as they interpreted, the superiority of a life dedicated to learning and scholarship rather than the cloister, but nevertheless without marriage. Petrarch, although a cleric of convenience in minor orders, wrote poetry about a consuming and unconsummated love for Laura. Yet he lived with a concubine and had two children by her. In a Latin work of Stoic consolation, *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, Petrarch argues that the death of a wife is not a cause for sorrow: the husband has freedom at last to pursue a life of philosophy, for which she was an impediment while alive. He also wrote a well-known letter to Lombardo della Seta on the dangers of taking a wife, especially a beautiful one, using further arguments from *Adversus Jovinianum*.<sup>20</sup> It was refuted by the humanist Pier Candido Decembrio (see below, pp. 354–56).

Boccaccio's comic tales about love and *fortuna* in his *Decameron* might lead us to believe that he was surely married. His Latin works give a truer impression: Boccaccio went through a 'conversion' to scholarship and asceticism in later life. Thus his collection of women's biographies, *De mulieribus claris*, declared 'the

<sup>18</sup> Delhay, 'Le Dossier anti-matrimonial de l'*Adversus Jovinianum* et son influence', p. 74. A work incorporating the fragments attributed to Theophrastus while becoming famous in its own right is Walter Map's *Dissuasio Valerii ad Ruffinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat*. See Schmitt, 'Theophrastus in the Middle Ages'; and Pratt, 'Jankyn's *Book of Wikked Wives*'.

<sup>19</sup> For Aquinas, see *Summa theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 154, art. 8, obj. 2. Aquinas first quotes Jerome: 'nihil interest ex qua causa quis insaniat. Unde Sixtus [...] adulter, inquit, est amator ardentior in suam uxorem'. Then, explaining that this is indeed a kind of adultery, Aquinas continues: 'Et quia ille qui est ardentior amator uxoris, facit contra bonum matrimonii, inhoneste eo utens, licet fidem non violet. Ideo aliquantulum potest adulter nominari'.

<sup>20</sup> See Panizza, 'Stoic Psychotherapy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance'. Book II, dialogue 18 is about losing a wife. The solution for any deeply disturbing emotion, whether elation or sorrow, is suppression. You are 'cured' when you feel nothing. For Petrarch's letter to Lombardo della Seta, see *Seniles*, 15. 3.

fountainhead of the European tradition of female biography', is also criticized for 'its heavy-handed moralizing as foreign to modern tastes as it is possible to be'.<sup>21</sup> Part of the reason lies in Boccaccio's adoption of Jerome's criteria for praising a woman, even a pagan married one: chastity, modesty, silence, self-sacrifice. Like Jerome, he transforms pagan women into Christian look-alikes; and also following Jerome, pride of place goes to Lucretia: 'Romane pudicitie dux egregia atque sanctissimum vetuste parsimonie decus' ('leading example of Roman *pudicitia* and most divine ornament of ancient frugality'). Her *pudicitia*, 'tanto clarius, nunquam satis laudata, pudicitia sua dignis preconiiis extollenda est, quanto acrius ingesta vi ignominia expiata' ('which can never be sufficiently commended, should be extolled all the more highly, as she expiated with such severity the ignominy thrust violently upon her').<sup>22</sup> In the case of a chieftain's wife, murder is praised as 'proof' of chastity. She returns to her husband with her Roman assailant's head under her dress 'quasi pretium illati dedecoris et ruboris feminei, quod potuerat, purgamentum tulisset' ('as if to pay the price of the dishonour she had suffered and to purge the shame she had endured as a woman').<sup>23</sup> For Boccaccio, we may rank her with Lucretia, for she risked death rather than return to her husband with her honour in doubt: she knew that 'nisi per maximos ausus et discrimen, posse testari in corpore violato illibatam fuisse mentem' ('only great daring and great risk could prove the purity of intention in her defiled body').<sup>24</sup> Female readers are admonished that it is not enough to weep and lament at being raped; 'dum possit quis in vindictam egregio processerit opere' ('within the limits of possibility one must go on to avenge the outrage with a noble action').<sup>25</sup> In his life of the Roman matron Sulpicia, Boccaccio describes chaste behaviour in terms Jerome had used for the widow Furia and other ascetics: she must fix her eyes downwards, speak little, avoid feasting, singing and dancing, keep herself busy at all times, wear no make-up, perfume or ornaments, and

cogitationes appetitusque noxios totis calcare viribus, meditationibus sacris insistere atque vigilare; [...] et viri etiam non absque frontis animique rubore, in amplexu ad prolem suscipiendam accedere.

<sup>21</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. by Brown, p. xxii.

<sup>22</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. by Brown, pp. 194–95, 198–99.

<sup>23</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. by Brown, pp. 308–09.

<sup>24</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. by Brown, pp. 310–11.

<sup>25</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. by Brown, pp. 310–11.

trampling with all her strength on harmful thoughts and desires, [she must be] vigilant and persistent in holy meditation; [...] and even to her husband's embraces she must go with a modest face and heart and for the sake of procreation.<sup>26</sup>

Salutati was the main figure in the transition to kinder views because, although like Petrarch he was devoted to humanist studies, unlike Petrarch he embraced public office and the active life, ending up as the Chancellor of the Florentine Republic from 1375 to his death in 1406. Salutati also married twice, fathering at least ten children. He went through a change of heart concerning Jerome's invective, defending its values in a letter of 30 June, 1366, where he followed Jerome's line about the incompatibility of taking a wife and a life of study. Later, in a letter of July 1393 he delivered what was in effect a eulogy of marriage, unmistakably opposed to Jerome, but also opposed to Petrarch, his friend and guide in classical studies. Chastity and virginity, Salutati noted, come under counsels of perfection, not obligations; while marriage, on the other hand, comes under divine law — an important point followed up by later writers including Erasmus.<sup>27</sup> Also, before 1391 and perhaps as early as 1367, he composed a *declamatio*, arguing on opposing sides as to whether Lucretia should take her life. Those encouraging her to live are overcome by Lucretia herself in a far longer speech, in which she justifies suicide for the sake of 'proving' her chastity. Near the end of his life, however, he appeared to disown the work, shifting to an Augustinian point of view on philosophical and theological issues. Augustine had explicitly condemned Lucretia's suicide in his *City of God*.<sup>28</sup>

Salutati marks the beginnings among humanists of a critical wave eroding Jerome's pessimism on marriage and civic life in the *polis*. Taken as a whole, humanists were highly-educated school teachers and university professors, civil servants, secretaries of princes and ecclesiastics, courtiers and diplomats, who objected to

<sup>26</sup> Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, trans. by Brown, pp. 278–81. This Sulpicia, wife of the noble Fulvius Flaccus (chapter 67), is distinguished from another Sulpicia, wife of Lentulus Truscellio (chapter 85). See Kolsky, *The Genealogy of Women*. On Jerome's influence, pp. 59–62.

<sup>27</sup> For letters, see Salutati, *Epistolario*, ed. by Novati, I, 32, and II, 365–74, discussed in Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, pp. 110–13. For a succinct account of his life and works with bibliography, see Kohl and Witt, eds, *The Earthly Republic*, pp. 81–92. On the *Declamatio Lucretiae*, see Jed, *Chaste Thinking*. Dates of composition discussed on p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> In addition to Baron on Salutati's intellectual development, see Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, I, 56–101. For Augustine, see *City of God*, trans. by McCracken, I, 19. 'Si non est illa impudicitia qua invita opprimitur, non est haec iustitia qua causa punitur' ('If there is no impurity in her being ravished not consenting, there is no justice in her being punished not unchaste').

the imposition of clerical values on their lives in the world. Their knowledge of the classics showed them that Jerome had misconstrued the ancients on marriage. They also knew Latin and Greek so well they began to emend ancient texts, pagan and Christian, finding flaws, for example, in the Latin Vulgate Bible attributed to Jerome and his school. Most importantly, they studied carefully and translated Greek texts on marriage and the family by Plutarch, the most favourable Greek writer on women and marriage, (Pseudo-) Aristotle and Xenophon. Pier Candido Decembrio (c. 1392–1477), Francesco Barbaro (c. 1390–1454), Lorenzo Valla (1407–57) and Giannantonio Campano (also Campana, Campanus; 1429–77), to name but a few, built up a body of arguments supported by classical and biblical authorities that presented marriage as natural, moral, honourable and — most damaging of all to Jerome and his followers — consonant with the finest Christian values. It could be said that these humanists, culminating in Erasmus, revived Jovinian, reconstructing his side suppressed for so long under the weight of Jerome's authority.

In *De vitae ignorantia*,<sup>29</sup> a paradoxical dialogue between Pier Candido Decembrio and a friend, Sanino Risio, a studious cleric, the issue at stake is the old dichotomy between choosing the religious life or marriage. Decembrio states explicitly that he wished to refute the ascetic views expressed by Petrarch in his letter to Lombardo della Seta (referred to above). The *character* Decembrio seeks a *vita quieta et iocunda* (p. 99) ('a tranquil, pleasant life'). Risio tries to persuade him that peace of mind comes with poverty and solitude; when that appeal fails, Risio passes in review all the professions, liberal arts, and trades that a young man might pursue. At the end, he exclaims in desperation:

Scio nunc tandem, quid pre omnibus affectes et queras. Velles uxorem ditem ducere, que te aleret et cum qua vitam pinguem et quietam sub tecto duceres (*De vitae ignorantia*, p. 105).

At last I know what you are drawn to and what you seek above all! You would like to marry a wealthy woman who would provide for you, and with whom you could lead an easy, tranquil domestic life.

Risio has hit the nail on the head. Decembrio, however, is not without strong moral values. His wife must have a good character, otherwise marriage would be no better than prison. When Risio presses him: 'Matrimonium igitur laudas'

<sup>29</sup> See the monograph by Ditt, *Pier Candido Decembrio*, pp. 21–107. I quote from the text of *De vitae ignorantia* established by Ditt, pp. 99–106. English translations are my own. In the service of the Sforza in Milan and the d'Este in Ferrara, Decembrio was famed primarily as a historian and translator from the Greek.

('You therefore praise marriage'), Decembrio answers 'Permaxime!' ('To the highest degree!'), and delivers a short but fervent *encomium matrimonii*:

Quid enim dulcius quam amicum habere, cum quo omnia conferre possis ut tecum, cum quo iocunda pariter et aspera communices, qui tibi assideat, qui die noctuque te curet, vivum et salvum aveat, tua ut propria custodiat, domum servet absenti, praesens ipse sufficiat: hec coniunx pudica et bene morata sola prestabit. Adde sobolis iocunditatem, te ipsum in filii facie videre, habere qui post te tui loco domum regat, genus propaget. Sumito ex te ipso exemplum, quid esset sine te tuorum iocunditatis, quae spes, quae gloria, quod decus! (*De vitae ignorantia*, p. 105).

What can be sweeter than having a friend with whom you can share everything as with another self? With whom you can speak just as openly about pleasant experiences as about bitter ones? A friend who cares for you, who looks after you day and night, who desires you to be alive and well, who preserves your property as if it were her own, who runs the home when you are away, for whom your presence alone is all she needs. This chaste and well brought up wife by herself will surpass everything else. Add the joy of offspring, seeing yourself in the face of your son, having someone to rule the household after you have gone and continue your line, taking you as a model. What satisfaction when you are no more among your descendants, what hope, what glory, what honour!

Decembrio then remarks, not without irony: 'Hoc nisi te scire velim neminem sine coniuge honestam vitam posse ducere!' (*De vitae ignorantia*, p. 106) ('I would like to know if anyone, except you, can lead an upright life without a wife!').

Risio is not about to give up; he wants to know what Decembrio has to say about the clergy, who do not marry. Decembrio is scathing. They enter on the path of lust and gluttony: 'nempe ut omittam quae perpetuo silenda sunt, credisne eos meretricibus carere?' (*De vitae ignorantia*, p. 106) ('indeed, leaving aside matters that must never be mentioned, do you believe that they lack their whores?'). To parallel his encomium of the good wife, Decembrio now delivers an invective against the whore, sharpening the distinction between an honourable wife and a whore. Jerome and clerical misogynists conflated the two, insulting wives:

Nihil est meretrice fedius, nihil vilius: audax, importuna, vinolenta, vorax, pigmentis feda, spurcitie scatens, forma depicta, lascivis gestibus, procacibus oculis, affectatis ornamentis ludicra, illecebris abundans; viri spoliatrix, infida comes, domesticus latro, amicorum expultrix, lenonum faultrix, expensa perpetua, pacis inimica, fetidum animal et omnino insatiabile baratrum. Huius tu consortium laudas? (*De vitae ignorantia*, p. 106).

Nothing is more sordid than the whore, nothing is baser! She is cheeky and nagging, she stinks of wine, she is voracious and foul-mouthed, her body is painted, her

gestures are lewd, her glances wanton, her display of adornment theatrical, and her flattery overflowing. She strips a man of his goods, her friendship is treacherous: she is a thief in your home, driving away your companions, supporting pimps and draining your income — this enemy of peace, a filthy creature, and an altogether bottomless pit. And is this is the kind of companionship you praise?

Decembrio's uncovering of clerical hypocrisy is by no means new: rife in the Middle Ages, it was recorded with gusto by Boccaccio in his famous collection of tales, the *Decameron*. So with God's help Decembrio hopes he will find a good wife to marry, a fate better, not worse, than living with a whore. (Decembrio admits there are chaste clerics, though few and far between. In the Roman Curia, nevertheless, such men are *rarissimi*!) The dialogue concludes with Risio still accusing Decembrio of *inconstantia*, while Decembrio accuses him in turn of *ignorantia* of the right state in life.

Decembrio was a good friend of Lorenzo Valla, whose major ethical dialogue, *De vero bono*, presents a more elaborated picture of an ethical, Epicurean way of life accepting natural pleasure as good, against a gloomy Stoic speaker who rehearses Jerome's, Petrarch's and Salutati's joyless Stoic ideals of embracing renunciation for its own sake. Valla did not write a dialogue or treatise specifically on marriage, but does make some relevant remarks on the issue, as we shall see below. His older contemporary, the Venetian Francesco Barbaro, of a distinguished aristocratic family, set himself that task, composing *De re uxoria* from 1415–16 as a wedding gift to Lorenzo de' Medici the Elder. Both learned and devout, Francesco Barbaro fitted his compilation of Greek and Latin doctrines on the excellence of conjugal love within a Christian framework. Plutarch's precepts dominate his treatise.<sup>30</sup>

While Barbaro urges obedience and submission for a wife — 'Imperet enim maritus: eius voluntati morem gerat uxor aequissimum est' (*De re uxoria*, p. 63, ll. 21–22) ('Let the husband give the orders: the most suitable situation is for the wife to accede to his will') — he also recommends friendship between husbands and wives that assumes a degree of equality. He adapts to his purpose

<sup>30</sup> For the critical edition of the Latin text, see Barbaro, *De re uxoria Liber in partes duas*, ed. by Gnesotto; and for an English translation of Part II, 'On Wifely Duties', see Kohl and Witt, eds, *The Earthly Republic*, pp. 189–228. On Barbaro, see King, *Venetian Humanism*, pp. 92–98 and 323–25; King, 'Caldiera, Marcello and the Barbaros'. Plutarch wrote four short works on women and marriage, all found in Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. by Babbitt and others: II: *Conjugalia praecepta* (1928), III: *Mulierum virtutes* (1931), IX: *Amatorius* (1962), and X: *Amatoriae narrationes* (1969).

a quotation from Pythagoras used by Cicero in *De Officiis* (1. 56) to describe friendship between *men*:

Sic denique velim cum viris suis vivant, et quodam modo animum misceant; et si fieri potest — quod vult Pythagoras in amicitia — unus fiat ex duobus' (*De re uxoria*, p. 67, ll. 24–26).

I would like wives to live with their husbands in such a way that they can always be in agreement; and if this can be done, then as Pythagoras defines friendship, the two are united in one.

Anyone acquainted with Genesis would surely pick up echoes of God's words about two human beings, male and female, joined together 'et erunt duo *in carne una* (2. 24); ('and they shall be two *in one flesh*'). It needs stating, however, that Plutarch's *Amatorius* holds up a conjugal love developing in time into a mutual loyalty and affection far more permanent than love for boys, and not so distant from Genesis. A husband and wife will hold all in common just as friends; 'they will forcibly join their souls and fuse them together, no longer wishing to be separate entities, or believing that they are so' (767E). Chapter 22 of *Amatorius* is devoted entirely to *exempla* of strong loyal wives, who would endure 'the embraces of bears and snakes more readily than the touch and couch of another man' (768B). One of them, Camma, achieved fame in the Renaissance after Barbaro included her tale in *De re uxoria*.<sup>31</sup> Barbaro, I believe, was the first to go as far as to equate conjugal love not only with friendship but also with the supreme Christian virtue of *caritas*, anticipating Valla in this respect. Note that while Jerome had used Plutarch to denounce marriage, Barbaro restores Plutarch to his proper place as remarkable defender of wives in a culture privileging homosexuality.

A Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), well known to Erasmus, adapted passages from Barbaro and Plutarch on marriage in *De Institutione feminae christianae*, about the three states of life appropriate for women. (I mention him here as another current bearing the Italian Barbaro and Plutarch into Erasmus's consciousness.)<sup>32</sup> Vives retains centuries-old suspicions about women's weakness and shamelessness, yet he is ready to speak of wives as friends and therefore in some way as equals of their husbands, following Barbaro:

Recordetur mulier quod [...] unum esse hominem cum marito atque ea de causa non aliter amet eum ac se ipsam. [...] Quod si amicitia ex duobus animis unum reddit, quanto id a coniugio verius efficaciusque praestari convenit, quod unum reli-

<sup>31</sup> See my article Panizza, 'Plutarch's Camma'.

<sup>32</sup> Quotation and translation from Vives, *De Institutione feminae christianae*, ed. by Fantazzi.



quas omnes amicitias longissime antecellit? Idcirco non unum modo vel animum vel corpus ex duobus facere dicitur, sed unum prorsus hominem. (*De Institutione feminae christianae*, II. 24)

Let a woman remember [...] that she is one person with her husband and for that reason should love him no less than herself. [...] If friendship between two souls renders them one, how much more truly and effectively must this result from marriage, which far surpasses all other friendships? Therefore it is said that wedlock does not make just one mind or one body out of two, but one person in every respect.

I have shown elsewhere by textual comparisons that Erasmus did indeed take much from Valla against the self-sufficient Stoics and in favour of a happier interpretation of human life motivated by charity. Valla did not name Jerome specifically, probably out of respect, but he has his speakers argue on several points concerning asceticism, marriage, nature and the body, and the senses and the pleasures they bring, taking positions that are quite the opposite of the Church Father's.<sup>33</sup> Valla's speakers bring out the pointlessness of asceticism, the lack of joy and especially the lack of loving caring relationships. Antonio da Rho, the Christian spokesman, makes clear that the truly Christian virtues are faith, hope and charity, of which the pagans knew nothing. The Stoics and their followers may have praised the practice of virtue for its own sake (called the *honestum*), but

Ne Deo quidem sine spe remunerationis servire fas est. Post fidem et spem est locus caritatis, magistre omnium virtutum, id est amoris in Deum et proximum. Quam qui non habet, etsi omnem substantiam suam distribuerit in pauperes et si traderit corpus suum ut ardeat, nihil ei prodest (III. 8, 2) [adapting Paul, 1 Cor. 13. 3]

Not even God may be served without hope of reward. After faith and hope the third place belongs to charity, mistress of all the virtues, which is the love of God and of our neighbour. If he who does not possess it should even divide all his substance among the poor and give his body to be burned, it avails him nothing.

Charity as love of neighbour encompasses love of husband and wife, of one's family, and of the community.

The Epicurean spokesman had argued most strongly that pleasure is not itself an evil because it is natural. (Jerome, we saw, treated bodily pleasures with horror, and any appreciation of women's beauty as a sin.) Beauty, the Epicurean reminds his audience, nature's principal gift to the body, was not granted to women as a snare to deceive men, or to be despised and scorned by them, but rather:

<sup>33</sup> Critical edition in Valla, *On Pleasure, De Voluptate*, ed. by Lorch.



ut fruerentur atque gauderent. Alioquin non esset causa cur ita studiose in fingendis vultibus ipsa natura elaborasset. Nam quid suavius, quid delectabilius, quid amabilius venusta facie? (I. 20, 1) [...] Qui pulchritudinem non laudat, hic aut animo aut corpore cecus est, et si oculos habet, illis orbandus quos se habere non sentit. (I. 20, 3)

so that they would use it and delight in it. Otherwise, there would be no reason for Nature to have taken such zealous pains in fashioning [women's] faces. Indeed, what is sweeter, what is more delightful, what is more lovable than a pretty face? [...] Anyone who does not praise beauty is blind in either his soul or his body, and if he has eyes, he ought to be deprived of those organs that he is not aware of possessing.

Virginity, which Jerome placed at the top of the spiritual ladder, is certainly not more natural than marriage: in one of the most entertaining parts of the Epicurean's speech, the (male) speaker impersonates a Vestal Virgin lamenting her condemnation at a tender age to enforced virginity, a fate worse than death. The *declamatio* counterpoises Jerome's praise of virgins of antiquity who preferred death to a loss of chastity, as well as Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae*.<sup>34</sup> The Christian spokesman argues that the pleasure of Paradise is increased by sharing with others. Marriage, too, means sharing and — even more daring — equality. When God said in Genesis 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a help like himself (*adiutorium simile sibi*, 2. 18), Valla has the Christian spokesman gloss on this controversial phrase, usually used to indicate the subordination, not the equality of woman. Reciprocity governs the marriage union, declares Antonio da Rho:

Ut in libris Moysi dicit Deus: Non est bonum hominem esse solum, faciamus ei adiutorium simile sibi. In quo, licet de femina dictum sit, tamen de viro quoque accipiendum est. Ut enim marito uxor, ita maritus uxori adiutorium est [...] Et item ceteri homines inter se, in quibus constat ratio caritatis. (*De vero bono*, III. 17, 3).

As God says in the Books of Moses: 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helpmeet like himself'. Although this was said of woman, it should be understood of man as well. As the wife is the helpmeet of the husband, so is the husband of his wife, and all other men are helpmeets to each other; likewise other people to each other, in whom the true sense of charity exists.

<sup>34</sup> See Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*'. For the Epicurean's arguments, and references to Jerome and imitators, see pp. 102–05.

Valla's defence of marriage extended beyond asserting its nobility. In *De professione religiosorum*, he denied the power of the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to give a man or woman a privileged start in the race for salvation. God would not reward priests, monks or nuns 'a hundredfold', as Jerome had interpreted Jesus's parable (see above, p. 348). Married people, by virtue of Baptism, could aspire to the same spiritual perfection as those taking vows.<sup>35</sup>

Antonio da Rho breaks down the ancient and medieval distinction between sense pleasure, *voluptas*, considered base because belonging to the body, and *beatitudo*, a spiritual delight belonging to the soul. Valla caught the underlying dualism that lay behind this distinction, as if a person were experiencing one kind of emotion with his eyes or ears, and another with his soul. For Valla, following Augustine on the resurrection of the body at the end of history, body and soul are one, and the happiness of eternal life is one with pleasure:

Quam beatitudinem quis dubitet aut quis melius possit appellare quam *voluptatem*, quo nomine etiam appellatam invenio, ut in *Genesi*, *Paradisum voluptatis*, [2. 8, 15; and 3. 23] et in *Ezechiele*, [31. 9] *Poma et arbor voluptatis*, et quedam similia, cum de bonis divinis loqueretur. [...] Neque ego video quid interest inter *voluptatem* et *delectationem*, nisi quod voluptas delectationem vehementem utique significat. (III. 9, 33)

Who would hesitate to call this happiness *pleasure*, or who could give it a better name? I find it called by this name, as in Genesis, *paradise of pleasure*, and in Ezekiel, *fruit and tree of pleasure*, and the like, when the goods associated with the divine are spoken of. [...] I do not see that there is any difference between *pleasure* and *delight*, unless pleasure signifies a powerful form of delight.<sup>36</sup>

Erasmus, it seems, also borrowed from a little-known Italian humanist, Giannantonio Campano, who wrote a short praise of marriage, *Libellus de dignitate atque fructu matrimonii*, published in 1495 and dedicated to a Roman layman, Francesco Massimo.<sup>37</sup> A cleric and open homosexual, Campano rose to

<sup>35</sup> For Erasmus's debt to Valla, see Panizza, 'Valla's *De voluptate ac de vero bono* and Erasmus' *Stultitiae Laus*'.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Aquinas, on the authorities of Boethius and Aristotle, disagrees: *voluptas* has nothing in common with *beatitudo*. See *Summa*, I-IIae. Q. 2, a. 6: 'neque voluptas corporalis est ipsa beatitudo, nec est per se accidens beatitudinis' ('bodily pleasure is not beatitude, nor is it a quality (accident) of beatitude').

<sup>37</sup> See Campano, *Libellus de dignitate atque fructu matrimonii*, ed. by Ferno, signatures d v<sup>v</sup>-e ii<sup>v</sup>. Translations mine. On Campano, see Telle, *Érasme de Rotterdam et le septième sacrement*, pp. 182-83.

the position of bishop. He views marriage in the mellowest light. Marriage has enjoyed dignity among all peoples, was instituted by God, and therefore existed *before* the Fall of Adam and Eve. Sex, reproduction, and death were not therefore the consequences of their sin of disobedience, a view contrary to Jerome and the theological mainstream. Referring to that controversial word used in Genesis about Eve — *adiutorium* — Campano comments that Eve was born from Adam and consequently in an intimate relationship with him, *socia atque adiutrix* ('companion and helpmeet'). Campano researched marriage customs from antiquity (this is the distinguishing feature of his treatise), finding that it has always been an occasion for celebration among all religions. Christianity, however, has given marriage even greater dignity than the ancients:

Maius est enim vinculum Dei quam conglutinatio naturae. [...] Fieretque nexus quidam arctissimus: non diversitate morum, non taedio convictus, non satietate consuetudinis, non morbo, non senio, non denique ulla humana vi dissolubilis (*De dignitate*, sig. e i<sup>r</sup>).

God's bond is greater than natural copulation [...] And this bond becomes strictly binding: it cannot be dissolved — neither by different customs, nor by the dullness of living together, nor by the weariness of habitual routine, nor by illness or old age, and finally not by any human power.

Campano, like Decembrio, Valla, and Barbaro, wants men to be positively attracted by the prospect of taking a wife. God Himself made sure his own Son would be born of a married woman: 'Ut nasci ipse [Christ] sine viro voluit, ita sine nuptiis nasci non voluit' (*De dignitate*, sig. e i<sup>r</sup>) ('Just as he wished to be born without a human father, so he did not wish to be born without wedded parents'). Christ, furthermore, performed his first miracle at the marriage at Cana. With such recommendations, the choice of a wife can be seen to bring happiness because she will be devoted to her husband more than to anyone else:

Sola uxor non invidet viro aut uxori vir, eadem vult quae tu, eadem illi tristia eadem iucunda; quae tibi coniuncta vita, coniuncta fortuna est — vix potest superesse in vita cum tu demigras. (*De dignitate*, sig. e ii<sup>r</sup>.)

Only a wife does not wish ill to her husband, nor a husband to his wife. She wants the same things you want: the same things bring her sadness, and the same happiness. Her life is joined to yours, and so is her good and bad fortune — she is hardly able to survive when you pass away.

Campano, finally, joins a wife's love to charity, just as Barbaro and Valla before him: 'Magna vis est charitatis uxoriae' ('Great is the power of a wife's charity'). 'Sola infi-

nite te amat, quum tota ex te uno dependet; in te uno quiescit' ('She alone loves you infinitely, since she depends totally on you alone; in you alone she finds rest').<sup>38</sup>

Addressing the husband, Campano allows that some deference should be preserved by a wife towards him as the one created first, but insists that she is given to him by God 'ad societatem non servitutem, ad obsequium non ad mancipium' ('for companionship not servitude, as a pleasing aide not a piece of property'). God made her similar to him, therefore *non subsit*, she should not be subordinate.<sup>39</sup>

## Erasmus

Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469–1536) waged a lifelong war against scholastic theology, mocking the self-importance of monks and friars in their claims to lead a spiritually more 'perfect' life because of their vows of chastity and poverty. He fought for a return to the practices of the early church and Gospel teaching. That meant an ethical and devout life of doing good, and of charity to one's neighbour. Erasmus incurred the wrath of theologians when he defended marriage, and criticized covertly and overtly Jerome's views on the superiority of virginity and celibacy above the married state. (On the other hand, he always admired Jerome greatly for his biblical scholarship and considered him a Christian Cicero.) Italian humanists, with their arguments on the benefits of taking a wife and Christian marriage stretching back nearly a century, paved the way for an explicit onslaught against Jerome and a just as explicit revival of Jovinian, condemned by Jerome as 'Epicurean'. The tag was attached to Erasmus himself.

Erasmus's most forceful critique is his *Encomium matrimonii*, composed at the end of the fifteenth century, printed with a group of *opuscula* in 1518 and slipped into a manual of exemplary letters published in 1522, *De conscribendis epistolis*, as an *epistola suasoria* (see n. 1 above). It was attacked savagely as 'Lutheran', though Erasmus did not change his stance in the *Institutio christiani matrimonii* published in 1526. The old question — Should a wise man marry? — which Jerome answered negatively, appealing not just to Scripture but also to classical philosophers, now receives a resounding 'Yes!' — with Scripture and classical sources put to the service of the contrary thesis. Jerome's invective is countered by Erasmus's encomium.

Re-writing *Adversus Jovinianum* in many respects, Erasmus argues that marriage was instituted in Paradise *before* the fall, that Eve was created as a dear

<sup>38</sup> A wife's kindness, *benevolentia*, to her husband is greater than that of parents to their children, or vice-versa, of children to their parents, being second only to God, *De dignitate*, sig. e ii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Campano, *Libellus de dignitate atque fructu matrimonii*, ed. by Ferno, sig. e ii<sup>v</sup>.

companion — ‘nihil nobis uxore charius esse debere, nihil coniunctius, nihil tenacius adglutinatum’ (‘nothing should be dearer to us, nothing more closely joined, nothing more tightly glued than a wife’) — and that God desires the continuity of the human race, achieved only through marriage.<sup>40</sup> Mary herself was a married woman, and Christ performed his first miracle at a marriage feast at Cana, a sure sign of his approval. Erasmus brings to bear quotations from Paul about marriage being a ‘great sacrament’ (‘magnum matrimonii sacramentum est’, Ephesians 5. 32), and above all that marriage is honourable and the marriage bed undefiled (‘honorandum connubium, et thorus immaculatus’, Hebrews 13. 4).<sup>41</sup> Condemning as heretics those who find fault with marriage — an indirect barb at Jerome — Erasmus affirms the naturalness of sexuality: it is part of the human condition created by God. Passion, too, should not bring guilt:

Nec audio qui mihi dicat foedam illam pruriginem et Veneris stimulos non a natura, sed peccato profectam. Quid tam dissimile veri? Quasi vero matrimonium, cuius munus sine his stimulis peragi nequit, non culpam precesserit.

I have no patience with those who say that sexual excitement is shameful and that venereal stimuli have their origin not in nature but in sin. Nothing is so far from the truth. As if marriage, whose function cannot be fulfilled without these incitements, did not rise above blame.<sup>42</sup>

Erasmus places celibacy and marriage on the same level; there is nothing in celibacy itself to make it superior. Some of the Apostles themselves were married, he points out, and at the same time taught and gave instruction to followers. As for the one-sided defamation of wives encountered in Jerome, Erasmus restores the balance with a praise of taking a wife. Wives — and women — are not bad in themselves, just as husbands are not good in themselves. A bad wife is largely the fault of a bad husband: ‘Crede mihi, non solet nisi malis maritis mala uxor contingere. Adde quod tibi in manu est, ut bonam eligas’ (‘Believe me, as a rule only a bad husband gets a bad wife. Besides, it is within your power to choose a good one’).<sup>43</sup> Adultery, shamelessness, and lewdness are faults of human nature, not a

<sup>40</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, ed. by Margolin, p. 403, l. 773; *CWE* 25, 130.

<sup>41</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, ed. by Margolin, p. 405, l. 8, and p. 406, l. 3; *CWE* 25, 131–32. Erasmus uses *sacramentum* in the context of praising marriage, and downgrading celibacy which is not even mentioned for praise by Paul: ‘celibatus ne nominator quidem’. In his New Testament translation, he prefers *mysterium*. Reasons discussed by Pabel, ‘Exegesis and Marriage’, pp. 177–82.

<sup>42</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, ed. by Margolin, p. 398–400, ll. 190–92; *CWE* 25, 136.

<sup>43</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, ed. by Margolin, p. 410, ll. 32425; *CWE* 25, 141.

necessary concomitant of marriage. The objection made by Jerome that a good wife is a *rara avis* is at last answered with the stern advice to a prospective husband: 'Et tu rara uxore dignum te finge!' ('Make yourself worthy of a rare wife!').<sup>44</sup>

Against the objection that virginity is divine, while marriage is merely human (Jerome again), Erasmus accepts that virginity is praiseworthy, but only for a few. It cannot be a rule for the majority, or the human race would die out:

Neque vero me clam est, magnis voluminibus priscorum patrum decantatas virginitatis laudes: quorum Hieronymus adeo miratur eam, ut non multum absit a contumelia matrimonii, et ab episcopis orthodoxis ad palinodiam invitaretur.

I am not unaware that the praise of virginity has repeatedly been sung in huge volumes by the early Fathers, among whom Jerome admires it so much that he all but abuses marriage, and was summoned to recant by some orthodox bishops.<sup>45</sup>

Jerome was indeed requested to mitigate his views, but not by bishops of the (Greek) Orthodox Church. Erasmus would surely have known that Jovinian was preaching at Rome, and that the diatribe had been sent there at the request of the Christian Roman senator Pammachius and his circle (probably in AD 393) perplexed by Jovinian's anti-ascetic teachings in general and his espousal of the spiritual equality of celibacy and marriage in particular. It was Pammachius and a circle of lay people around him who were shocked by Jerome's crudity of language, and extreme denunciation of marriage, and who urged him to recant. (He did not.) This issue had been smouldering among Christians for some time; Erasmus is recalling earlier debates among Greek bishops at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 he had learned about from the historian Socrates Scholasticus. Bishop Paphnutius had spoken in favour of allowing married men to be ordained against those who insisted on celibacy (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, I. 11). With Jerome, denigration of marriage was accompanied by invectives against women in general, and their innate devouring sexuality. With Erasmus, the contrary holds true. Women are worthy of praise, and men are the predators. He believes, furthermore, that so-called celibates, meaning the monks and priests he knew so well, were more sexually depraved than married people.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, ed. by Margolin, p. 412, ll. 1–2; *CWE* 25, 142. In Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, trans. by Freemantle, I. 47, Jerome says that a *bona et suavis uxor* is a *rara avis* ('a good and gentle wife is a rare bird').

<sup>45</sup> Erasmus, *Encomium matrimonii*, ed. by Margolin, p. 404, ll. 236–39; *CWE* 25, 138. Erasmus goes against the majority of Church fathers in his eulogy of marriage: Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Cyprian and Lactantius among the Latins alone.

<sup>46</sup> For a detailed analysis of the context surrounding *Adversus Jovinianum* see Kelly, *Jerome*:

A group of Colloquies published in 1523 discuss various aspects of marriage. *Virgo misogamos* ('The Girl with No Interest in Marriage'), and *Virgo poenitens* ('The Repentant Girl') are two sides of the same coin. In the first, Eubulus (the name means 'good counsellor'), wants to marry Catherine, who is determined to enter the convent against her parents' wishes. Her suitor tries to persuade her that she has idealized convent life, and that she does not have to take vows to lead a holy Christian life, anyway. The stubborn young girl enters, and in the companion piece returns home after twelve days in the convent, disillusioned, but fortunately before she has taken binding vows.<sup>47</sup> In *Proci et puellae* ('Courtship') the suitor and his betrothed are presented as in love, well-matched, and thoughtfully embarking on life together. Marriage is friendship. Despite its title *Coniugium* ('Marriage'), this colloquy is not about marriage as such, but examines impediments to marriage; while in *Adolescentis et scorti* ('The Young Man and the Harlot') the harlot reveals that far from being celibate, monks are her best clients, paying her with money they've received from penitents!<sup>48</sup>

### *Epilogue: Ambrosius Catharinus and Celio Secondo Curione*

The responses to Erasmus's benign views on marriage on the part of Italians are shaped in large part by the shattering events of Luther's revolt. Erasmus may have taken much from earlier Italians, but his influence was deliberately suppressed in Italy after his death, as Silvana Seidel Menchi has shown.<sup>49</sup> Opinions divide sharply between those of theologians and canon lawyers promoting a conservative Catholic view formulated at the Council of Trent, and a small group of laymen and dissident clerics who come to be known as Evangelicals, and are later condemned as heretics and Protestants. I have chosen two authors embodying the polarization. First, a Catholic canon lawyer and Dominican friar, determined

*His Life, Writings and Controversies*, pp. 179–94. For Socrates, see Socrates Scholasticus, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. by Hansen; English translation in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Schaff, II: *Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories* (1891). See also Telle, *Érasme de Rotterdam et le septième sacrement*. The entire first part is a study of Erasmus's arguments against monastic vows.

<sup>47</sup> See Erasmus, *Colloquies*, trans. by Thompson, who provides an illuminating introduction for each Colloquy.

<sup>48</sup> See discussion of pro-marriage colloquies in Telle, *Érasme de Rotterdam et le septième sacrement*.

<sup>49</sup> See Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia 1520–1580*.



to preserve the clergy's superiority on the question of celibacy and marriage, Thomistic theology and Jerome's authority: Lancilotto de' Politi (1484–1553), who wrote under the name Ambrosius Catharinus; and second, a humanist layman, professor of classics, and Evangelical: Celio Secondo Curione (1503–69).

The furore against Erasmus on marriage gravitated first of all around the Sorbonne, and also the Roman Curia. Although Catharinus was sufficiently impressed by Savonarola's reformist writings to follow him into the Dominican order, he soon turned against him, and more fiercely against Luther and his sympathizers in Italy like Bernardino Ochino. Catharinus did not even spare his distinguished fellow-Dominican theologian, Cardinal Cajetan (Tommaso de Vio), behind whom he detected the baleful influence of Erasmus; he attacked Cajetan specifically on the latter's 'corrections' of Jerome.<sup>50</sup> For instance, Cajetan, following Erasmus, found Jerome's forced interpretation of the parable of the sower and his seed in *Adversus Jovinianum* objectionable (see above, p. 348). Catharinus was furious: '[Cajetanus mittit] illam nobilissimorum tractatorum elegantem ac famigeratam ut Hieronymus in Iovinianum testatur expositionem' ('Cajetan leaves out that elegant, famous and most sublime exposition [of the parable] that Jerome bears witness to against Jovinian').<sup>51</sup> Jerome's view is especially relevant in the contemporary world, Catharinus avers, referring to Lutheran preaching in favour of a married clergy and the abolition of monks and nuns:

Certe hoc [expositio] praesertim tempore mittenda non erat, quando haeretici non tam spurca doctrina quam abominabili exemplo coelibem ac virgineum statum [...] conculcant. (ibid.)

Indeed, [Jerome's] interpretation should not have been left out, especially at this time when heretics trample [...] on the virginal and celibate state in life not only with their filthy teaching but also their despicable example.

<sup>50</sup> On Catharinus, see Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, II, 128–34; and entry 'Lancilotto de' Politi' by H. Guggisberg, *CEBR*, III, 105–06. Cajetan, who debated with Pico della Mirandola in 1494 and Luther himself in 1518, enjoyed the reputation of an austere philosopher and theologian. He was most revered for his commentaries on Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*, which re-established Aquinas as the supreme theologian of the Counter-Reformation. See Aguzzi-Barbagli, 'Tommaso de Vio'.

<sup>51</sup> For Catharinus's objections against Cajetan, see Catharinus, *In excerpta quaedam de commentariis Rev. Card. Caietani*. This quotation, p. 324. Against marriage and in defence of Jerome, his nephew Clemente published posthumously, Catharinus, *Opusculum de coelibatu*. This little tract is explicitly directed against those who praised Erasmus's *Encomium matrimonii*. As it encapsulates the 'hard line' on marriage and celibacy, I have examined it further in the Appendix, below.



The word of the Lord, concludes Catharinus, simply does not allow for the cardinal's (and, let it be understood, Erasmus's) readings.<sup>52</sup>

The diffused pietistic work, a staple spiritual guide of Evangelical circles, *Il beneficio di Cristo*, also came under his scrutiny. Composed by Benedetto da Mantova, and printed anonymously in Venice in 1543, it promoted the core Lutheran belief of salvation by faith alone, implying that the institutional Church and most of the seven sacraments were of scant importance in one's spiritual life.<sup>53</sup>

Erasmus had defended marriage and family life at one remove. A humanist who did marry, had nine children, wrote favourably to and about women and the married life — thus practising what he preached — was Celio Secondo Curione (1503–69). Curione, furthermore, was a friend and great admirer of Erasmus, though he could not forgive the elder humanist for not coming down expressly on the side of Luther and the Evangelicals.

Curione's animosity towards Jerome is found at its sharpest in his major satirical dialogue, written first in Latin (*Pasquillorum tomi duo*), then translated into Italian, probably by the Evangelical friar Agostino Strozzi about 1545 in Venice (*Pasquino in estasi* and the longer *Pasquino in estasi nuovo e molto più pieno ch'el primo*), and later into other European languages, including English.<sup>54</sup> (I shall quote from the longer and more disseminated *Pasquino in estasi nuovo*.) In this dialogue Pasquino and his companion Marforio, talking statues that since the beginning of the sixteenth century in Rome were given the right to voice all kinds of scurrilous anti-Papal and anti-Curia jokes, now, just before the Council of Trent, became the mouthpieces for Curione's radical Evangelical reform of

<sup>52</sup> Catharinus, *In excerpta quaedam de commentariis Rev. Card. Caietani*, p. 324. Against Martin Luther, Catharinus dedicated to Emperor Charles V his *Apologia pro veritate Catholice et Apostolice fidei*; this was followed by another contentious tract against Luther in 1521. Against Ochino appeared Catharinus, *Speculum haereticorum*; and later, in Italian, Catharinus, *Compendio d'errori e inganni luterani*. A modern edition of this latter work can be found in Benedetto da Mantova, *Il beneficio di Cristo*, ed. by Caponetto, pp. 343–422. His attack on Savonarola, Catharinus, *Discorso [...] contra la dottrina e le profetie di Fra G. Savonarola*, was also written in Italian and published in 1548.

<sup>53</sup> See Benedetto da Mantova, *Il beneficio di Cristo*, ed. by Caponetto. The Italian is published with other versions and translations of the 16th century — including one into English, dated 1575 according to Caponetto.

<sup>54</sup> On Curione, see Biondi, 'Celio Secondo Curione'; and on Italian Evangelicals, Cantimori, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento*, *passim*. For his satirical dialogue, see Panizza, 'Pasquino among Anglican Reformers'; and Panizza, 'Pasquino and his *pasquinate* turned Protestant'. Curione receives some attention in Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations*.

Christian society. The Latin may have been composed around 1540, and published clandestinely in 1544; the Italian, as mentioned, is given the date 1545.<sup>55</sup>

Like Erasmus, Curione condemns the vows of virginity and celibacy made by nuns, monks, and priests, the bedrock of the claims of religious orders to be spiritually superior to lay people who marry. Luther had already spread his conviction that monastic life was 'unnatural' and not found in the Bible. Like Erasmus, Curione blames Jerome more than any other for the debasement of marriage, especially in *Adversus Jovinianum* and some of his letters. When the subject of virginity is raised by Pasquino, Marforio cannot believe his ears:

Ma mi meraviglio forte che San Hieronimo inalzasse tanto questa verginità ch'egli avesse ardire di concluder così: 'Egli è buono all'uomo star senza moglie; adunque è male all'uomo lo aver la moglie'. Et altrove ei dice che Dio ha promesso il paradiso alla verginità, e la terra al maritaggio. PASQUINO. Questa è la schietta eresia di Montano essa, la quale egli seguita ancora in dannar del tutto il secondo matrimonio, sì come si vede in quello ch'ei scrive a Joviniano [...] e dove ei si ficca per confirmar la sua openione, egli stiracchia tutta la Scrittura al suo proposito, senza proposito.

I'm truly amazed that St Jerome exalted virginity so much that he dared to conclude the following: 'It is good for a man to be without a wife; therefore it is bad for a man to have a wife'. And elsewhere he says that God has promised Paradise to virginity, and the earth to marriage. PASQUINO. That is the heresy of Montanus, pure and simple, which [Jerome] follows in condemning second marriages altogether. You can see this in what he writes to Jovinian; and wherever he sticks his nose to find support for his opinion, he twists and bends the Scriptures for his own purpose, with no purpose.<sup>56</sup>

In *Adversus Jovinianum* (I. 7), Jerome had quoted Paul (1 Cor. 7. 1): 'Bonum est homini mulierem non tangere' ('It is good for a man not to touch his wife'), but had then added his own specious corollary: 'ergo malum est mulierem tangere' ('therefore it is wrong for him to touch her'). There is nothing morally worthy in marriage, only in virginity, Jerome had stated, claiming that God agreed with him by granting the eternal reward of Paradise to virgins, while married men and women must be satisfied with earthly happiness alone: 'Nuptiae terram replent; virginitas paradisum' ('Marriage fills the earth; virginity fills Paradise'). Montanus said things similar to Jerome, yet was condemned as a heretic along with Jovinian. The implication is that Jerome avoided condemnation only because of his author-

<sup>55</sup> See Biondi, 'Celio Secondo Curione', p. 446, and British Library Catalogue, *sub voce*.

<sup>56</sup> *Pasquino in estasi nuovo*, fol. E4<sup>r</sup>.

ity. After Pasquino expresses disgust at the opening of Jerome's Letter to the widow Furia (see above, p. 349), paraphrased as 'Tu sei divenuta sfacciata, tu hai fatto volto di puttana' ('You've become shameless; you have the face of a whore'), Marforio interjects:

MARFORIO. 'Mi dà maggior meraviglia ancor questo, che costoro habbiano tanto celebrato questa virginità, non essendo in tutta la Santa Scrittura un sol precetto che proibisca ad alcuna sorte di persona il maritarsi; anzi, essendone tanti che lo comandano perché con questo modo Dio vuole che il mondo si mantenga.'

MARFORIO. I'm even more amazed that this bunch [Jerome and others] have exalted virginity so much. After all, in the Sacred Scriptures you will not find a single precept forbidding anybody to get married. Rather, there are so many that command it, as by this means God wishes the world to be kept going.

Curione is remarkable for educating his five daughters (Violante, Dorotea, Angiola, Celia, and Felice) to the same level as his four sons. In fact, he wrote a treatise to his daughters in Italian similar to but longer than the one he wrote to his sons in Latin. He also wrote a letter/treatise to his great friend in Ferrara, the humanist Fulvio Morato, father of the outstanding woman humanist, Olimpia Morata, about educating children, with specific references to girls.<sup>57</sup> Concerning their programme of studies, he rejected the need for 'authorities,' philosophical or theological, preferring what he had seen and found out for himself.<sup>58</sup> Girls should not be forbidden to read, write, and become learned since 'non meno atte sono [le fanciulle] allo studio delle lettere che siano molti fanciulli: il che la esperienza lo dimostra,' ('[girls] are no less suited to literary studies than many boys — which is proved by experience').<sup>59</sup> In Curione's Christian education, there is no mention of

<sup>57</sup> Curione was responsible for editing and publishing all the known works of Morata. See Morato, *Monumenta*, dedicated to Isabella Bresegna, an Evangelical noblewoman. Three later editions, 1562, 1570, and 1580, were all dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I of England. In English, see Morato, *The Complete Writings*, trans. by Parker.

<sup>58</sup> See 'Una lettera della honesta & Christiana creanza de' figliuoli' ('A letter on Children's Righteous and Christian Upbringing'), part of four items published under the general title of *Una familiare et paterna institutione della Christiana religione di Celio Secondo Curione, più copiosa, & più chiara che la Latina del medesimo, con certe altre cose pie* ('A Father's Religious Instruction for the Christian Family, by Celio Secondo Curione, fuller and clearer than the Latin one he also wrote, with some other devout pieces'), Basle [no date or publisher, but the latest individual item bears the date 1550].

<sup>59</sup> fol. 13<sup>r</sup>. I follow gathering numbers. Curione's views can be compared to those of Erasmus in his colloquy, *Abbatis et eruditae* (The Abbot and the Learned Lady), in which a lazy, ignorant abbot is amazed at finding that he is talking to a married woman of considerable learning.

Jerome, and the Church Father's teaching on virginity is contradicted on several points. Boys and girls should work for their living (another barb at monks and nuns who did not work), keeping the advice of St Paul, Curione says, that those who don't work don't eat. Marriage to a partner of their choice is right for most Christians; virginity, on the other hand, is a rare gift, of no use to society anyway.

Both Erasmus and Curione were condemned by the Inquisition, and their views on marriage and celibacy buried to a great extent by the triumph of conservative currents at the Council of Trent. Marriage did come up for discussion; the pronouncements made reiterated the 'traditional' views of Jerome and silenced those of Erasmus, Curione, and the Italian humanists discussed above. At the 24<sup>th</sup> Session, 1563, the resulting Canon 10 put Jerome back on his pedestal:

If anyone says that the married state excels the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is better and happier to be united in matrimony than to remain in virginity or celibacy, let him be anathema.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the walls of Jerome's stronghold suffered damage, and an alternative extolling marriage and the role of wife allowed some space. Jerome did not suffer defeat, but his views on sexual asceticism were one of the causes that brought about a split in religious allegiances. Roman Catholicism continued to uphold virginity and celibacy as 'better' than the married state (down to the present), and continued to promote monasteries and nunneries as centres for cultivating spiritual 'perfection'. On the other hand, Protestantism parted ways with Jerome, following Erasmus, Luther, and a host of reformers for whom married life — even a married clergy — became the norm. The Italian humanists considered in this article, I would like to conclude, deserve greater recognition than they have received so far in the formation of Erasmus's views on the dignity of marriage, and, on a more general level, in the emergence of lay values regarding marriage over clerical ones.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. by Schroeder, p. 182.

<sup>61</sup> The years around the writing of Erasmus's *Encomium* witnessed many other Italian dialogues and treatises on the merits of women, on their equality with men and the goodness of the married life. To what extent Erasmus may have been aware of them after he wrote the *Encomium*, or to what extent he may have engaged with the formulation of their opinions can only be speculated. Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, set in 1507, circulated in manuscript

## Appendix

I have chosen to discuss the work issued posthumously under Catharinus's name by his nephew Clemente: *Opusculum adversus impium Erasmus* ('Little Treatise against Wicked and Irreligious Erasmus') in this Appendix, as it came out in 1581, after the deaths of the main protagonist, Erasmus, and his contemporaries. Although I have mentioned it cursorily in my article (above, p. 366, and n. 51) I thought on further reflection it deserved attention as an illustration of how far the Catholic Church had retrenched after the Council of Trent on the merits of celibacy and marriage. Reasserting Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* meant reasserting the authority of a male, celibate clergy, convinced of its mandate to dominate the laity because of vows setting it apart like a caste, more noble than the rest of humankind. In the eyes of Trent, Erasmus, and earlier humanists together with Evangelicals and reformers of the early sixteenth-century had opened a Pandora's Box, which was now to remain tightly shut. For this 'little treatise' to have been published at all signifies that Erasmus's *Encomium* and the teaching within it were still perceived as a threat, a poison not yet obliterated from Catholic memory in Italy.

It is hard to tell how much compiling and editing is due to Catharinus's nephew; what is clear is that from the title page, Catharinus's authority as Dominican and archbishop is explicitly contrasted to one adjective reducing Erasmus to despicable infamy: *F. Ambrosii Catharini Politi Senen. Ord. Praed. Archiepiscopi Compsani OPUSCULUM De Coelibatu, adversus impium Erasmus*. (In smaller print his nephew says he now brings it to light for the first time, as if it were completed by his uncle, but left unpublished.)<sup>62</sup> It is also hard to tell to what extent the fictional frame is genuine, intended by the uncle, or added by the nephew. Catharinus is presented as the author, who sees a young Clemens leafing through *De conscribendis epistolis* (was it still being used as a school text?). Clemens is disturbed at the letter about marriage versus celibacy and turns to

in early versions, but not printed until 1527, for instance, contains a long account of the tale of Camma, originally from Plutarch, and adapted by Francesco Barbaro (see nn. 30 and 31 above). The context is one where Giuliano responds to the objection that no wife is chaste, and that therefore they do not truly love their husbands. On the contrary, he will show that 'in tutte le istorie si conosce che quasi sempre le mogli amino i mariti più che essi [i mariti] le mogli' ('in all accounts, it's recognized that almost always, wives love their husbands more than they love their wives'). (*Il Libro del cortegiano*, Bk 3, chap. 25). Women are not fickle, but models of *constantia* and *fortitudo*.

<sup>62</sup> Siena: Luca Bonetti, 1581. There is no copy of this rare work in British libraries. I am grateful to the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome for sending me a CD copy and permission to quote. Shelf number: GG VI 66.

his uncle for advice. Presumably, the advice was effective; otherwise the nephew would not have wanted to publish it.

Within, Catharinus sets up an analogy: just as Jerome had attacked Jovinian, labelling him an Epicurean and materialist for denying that virginity was a state in life superior to marriage, and wanting it to possess equal value; so Catharinus now attacks Erasmus, the new Jovinian, to be trampled down for the same reasons. Erasmus, we saw, had dismantled Jerome, section by section (see above, pp. 362–65); Catharinus now does the same to Erasmus, quoting passages, and taking them apart. No concessions are granted whatsoever: Jerome never erred, Erasmus never stops erring. Absolute principles underlie Catharinus's denunciations. Erasmus called himself a Christian, therefore, arguments from reason or natural law should have had no value compared to Scripture and church teaching, both divine truth. Erasmus's skill at rhetorical arguments is dangerous; his appeal to examples from history and classical literature valueless. His heretical view of human nature, like Jovinian's, is not only Epicurean but also Pelagian — that is, we are basically good and can lead happy, moral lives. His praise of sexual feelings as natural would turn men into beasts. Not for nothing is Erasmus given the name Cosmophilus, 'Worldly-Lover'; he is a heretic, denier of the immortality of the soul. And if that were not enough, he is an apostate, an atheist, and a Lucian. He turns simple souls away from the faith with his 'cunning', *vafritia*, and his 'light and as it were playful' style, *leviter et quasi ludens* (p. 10). Humourless Catharinus has spotted the quality that made Erasmus famous and beloved in his lifetime, that 'playful seriousness' (*serio-ludere*) he and Thomas More and countless Italians learned from Lucian, who would be denounced by Catholics and Protestants alike.<sup>63</sup> Although Catharinus's main target is the *Encomium*, it is the *Colloquies* that are the first Erasmian works to be named explicitly:

Why do I refer to the *Colloquies*? In fact whatever he has spewed out, he seems to have had the intention of either darkening the light of the Catholic faith, or corrupting Christian morals and implanting atheism.<sup>64</sup>

Catharinus, uncle, directs the *opusculum* at his bright young nephew Clemens, given the name Aporeticus, 'doubter'; and will strive to banish all doubt from young Clemens's mind about the 'best' state in life. The dialogue soon turns into

<sup>63</sup> See Panizza, 'Vernacular Lucian in Renaissance Italy'.

<sup>64</sup> 'Quid Colloquia cito? Imo vero, quicquid ille evomuit, vel ad obscurandum fidei catholicae lucem, vel ad corrumpendum Christianos mores, inserendumque atheismum videtur meditatus', p. 10.

invective: 'I judged it would be worth the effort to refute the malice of this apostate' ('Refellere apostatae malignitatem operae pretium duxi'). Since God is on his side, success is guaranteed:

Erasmus's cheap sophistical trickery and empty pretences will in no way prevail, nor will his insolent manner of speaking.<sup>65</sup>

To call Erasmus an 'apostate', may seem far-fetched even as invective; for Catharinus, it is justified by Erasmus giving an interpretation of Scripture different from that of St Paul or Jerome. This implies that no interpretation other than that of Paul or Jerome on marriage and celibacy is permitted. In fact, after quoting a good part of Paul 1 Cor. 7, he sneers at Erasmus's famous Paraphrases of the New Testament, saying that Erasmus cannot pretend not to know the doctrine contained therein 'since he translated — or more truly, distorted — the whole New Testament six times!' ('cum totum Testamentum Novum sexies traduxerit, seu verius depravaverit', p. 22). (Note that for Catharinus, St Jerome never did anything of the kind!)<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> 'Nullo pacto praevalerunt illius captiosi rhetorculi praestigia et inanes fuci, nec illa dicendi procacitas', p. 12.

<sup>66</sup> For some of Jerome's distortions, see above, pp. 344–50, 360. It is not out of place to give the passages Catharinus quotes (pp. 21–22) from the Vulgate, 1 Cor. 7. 25–40, of Paul's advice on the benefits of not marrying, and of remaining a virgin. Marriage is not a good, but neither is it a sin; in either case, virginity is preferable:

(25) De virginibus autem praeceptum Domini non habeo; consilium autem do, tamquam misericordiam consecutus a Domino, ut sim fidelis.

(26) Existimo ergo hoc bonum esse propter instantem necessitatem, quoniam bonum est homini sic esse.

(27) Alligatus es uxori? Noli quaerere solutionem. Solutus es ab uxore? Noli quaerere uxorem.

(28) Si autem acceperis uxorem, non peccasti. Et si nupserit virgo, non peccavit: tribulationem carnis habebunt huiusmodi. Ego autem vobis parco.

(29) Hoc itaque dico, fratres: Tempus breve est: reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tamquam non habentes sint:

(30) Et qui flent, tamquam non flentes; et qui gaudent, tamquam non gaudentes; et qui emunt, tamquam non possidentes:

(31) Et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tamquam non utantur: praeterit enim figura huius mundi.

(32) Volo autem vos sine sollicitudine esse. Qui sine uxore est, sollicitus est quae Domini sunt, quomodo placeat Deo.

(33) Qui autem cum uxore est, sollicitus est quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeat uxori, et divisus est.

(34) Et mulier innupta, et virgo, cogitat quae Domini sunt, ut sit sancta corpore et spiritu. Quae autem nupta est, cogitat quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeat viro.



(35) Porro hoc ad utilitatem vestram dico, non ut laqueum vobis iniiciam, sed ad id quod honestum est, et facultatem praebeat sine impedimento Dominum obsecrandi.

(36) Si quis autem turpem se videri existimat super virgine sua, quod sit superadulta, et ita oportet fieri: quod vult faciat, non peccat, si nubat.

(37) Nam qui statuit in corde suo firmus, non habens necessitatem, potestatem autem habens suae voluntatis, et hoc iudicavit in corde suo, servare virginem suam, bene facit.

(38) Igitur et qui matrimonio iungit virginem suam, bene facit: et qui non iungit melius facit.

(39) Mulier alligata est legi quanto tempore vir eius vivit: quod si dormierit vir eius, liberate est a lege: cui vult, nubat: tantum in Domino.

(40) Beatior enim erit si sic permanserit secundum meum consilium: puto autem quod et ego Spiritum Dei habeam.

(1) [...] Bonum est homini mulierem non tangere:

(2) Propter fornicationem autem, unusquisque suam uxorem habeat [...]

The English is from the Douay (Catholic) version:

(25) Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful.

(26) I think therefore that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for a man so to be.

(27) Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.

(28) But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned: nevertheless such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you.

(29) This therefore I say, brethren; the time is short; it remaineth that they who have wives, be as if they had none;

(30) And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoiced, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they possessed not;

(31) And they that use this world, as if they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away.

(32) But I would have you to be without solicitude. He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God.

(33) But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided.

(34) And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

(35) And this I speak for your profit; not to cast a snare upon you, but for that which is decent, and which may give you power to attend upon the Lord, without impediment.

(36) But if any man think that he seemeth dishonoured, with regard to his virgin, for that she is above the age, and it must so be, let him do what he will; he sinneth not if she marry.

(37) For he that hath determined being steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but having power of his own will, and hath judged this in his heart to keep his virgin, doth well.

(38) Therefore both he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, does better.



Catharinus is sometimes more blinkered than Jerome: he does not indulge in quotations from pagan authorities, or lists of *exempla* of chaste pagan women. There is no appeal to the classics to bolster his own arguments. On the other hand, Catharinus is sometimes more careful than Jerome about misogyny. There are no denunciations of wives as such, and he does not say that marriage is an evil (but see below, where it is described as 'not a good'). He follows Jerome on over-population — the earth has enough people in it already, so there is no need to procreate; and he adds the *topos* that the earth is old and weary, and coming to an end.<sup>67</sup> More to the point, Catharinus develops Jerome's opinions about there being no sexual relations before the Fall, aligning sex with sin and death. Specifically against Erasmus, who argued that marriage was instituted in Paradise as mutual companionship providing happiness, *consortium felicitatis*, and derived its dignity from that exalted origin, Catharinus flatly denies that sex took place in Paradise. Nothing of the sort:

Granted that marriage was instituted in the Terrestrial Paradise, nevertheless, no matrimonial act was consummated there; but Adam knew his wife, as Scripture says, after he had been cast forth.<sup>68</sup>

Adam and Eve, furthermore, were wretched after the Fall, not happy. Catharinus turns for proof to a verse from 1 Cor 7 (see n. 66):

For the sacrament of matrimony which now exists, even if it was bestowed at the beginning for mutual companionship, is at present bestowed in an equal degree as a remedy. This cannot be denied. Listen to the Apostle: But for fear of fornication, he says, let every man have his own wife. He does not say: For mutual compan-

(39) A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty: let her marry to whom she will; but only in the Lord.

(40) But more blessed shall she be, if she so remain, according to my counsel; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

(1) [...] It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

(2) But for fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife [...]

<sup>67</sup> Catharinus notes that after the Deluge, God did not command Noah to increase and multiply. This command was appropriate only at the beginning of the world. But now the world is old ('mundi senectus') because 'repleta terra, multiplicatis populis plus satis, datus est coelibatui locus' ('now the earth is full, and nations have multiplied more than enough, there remains room for celibacy', p. 27).

<sup>68</sup> 'Ac licet in illo terrestri paradiso matrimonium sit institutum, nullum tamen matrimonii opus fuit ibi consummatum; sed post eiectionem [...] cognovit Adam, inquit Scriptura, uxorem suam' (p. 30).

ionship providing happiness, since by their original duplicity, companionship was stripped from that happiness.<sup>69</sup>

Catharinus plods through Erasmus's encomium with a lawyer's literal-mindedness. Speaking of procreation, Erasmus remarked (along with earlier humanists) that children bring a kind of immortality to the human species, because if we were all celibate, our race would perish.<sup>70</sup> Catharinus makes a direct stab *ad hominem*: if Erasmus liked marriage so much, what about himself? 'He chose a happy and pleasant life *without* marriage!' ('Qui laetam et iocundam *absque* matrimonio vitam eligit', p. 31, emphasis mine). But it is the mention of immortality that enables Catharinus to make one of his crude attempts at a *coup de grâce*, confusing a literary use of 'immortality' with a theological one:

There's a snake lurking in the grass! For as this Cosmophilus along with his Lucian never believed in the immortality of the soul, nor in the existence of God, he desired that immortality be understood clearly, which he thought could be everlasting in the fashion of beasts by the breeding of individuals.<sup>71</sup>

The accusation of atheism and materialism would put Erasmus beyond the Christian pale, worse than Protestants who at least believed in God and everlasting life. The repetition of Lucian, the alleged arch-mocker of morality and religion, sets the tone for further defamation. Remember Erasmus's defence of the sexual organs and their use; and even more daring, his defence of sexual pleasure as natural, necessary for procreation, and therefore good (see above, p. 363)? Catharinus explodes at this 'perverse' opinion, revealing his dark convictions, so similar to Jerome's, about the human race's corrupt nature, and the innate sinfulness of sex even within marriage. Not only is the end at hand; people's depravity has reached levels comparable to the times of Noah before the Deluge: 'They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage [...] and they knew not till the flood came, and took them all away' ('Comedentes et bibentes, nubentes et nuptui tradentes [...] Et non cognoverunt donec venit diluvium, et tulit omnes',

<sup>69</sup> 'Nam hoc matrimonii sacramentum quod nunc est, etsi ad consortium primitus datum est, ad remedium pariter nunc datum esse, oportet necessario confiteri. Audi Apostolum: Propter fornicationem, inquit, unusquisque suam uxorem habeat. Et non ait: Propter felicitatis consortium, quod per praevaricationem primaevam illa felicitate spoliatum est' (p. 31).

<sup>70</sup> See above, pp. 354–57, 362–64 for Erasmus and earlier humanists.

<sup>71</sup> 'Sed latet anguis in herba: quia hic Cosmophilus, cum animae immortalitatem, imo nec Deum esse cum suo Luciano crederet, eam immortalitatem intelligi non obscure voluit, quae more pecudum, generatione individuorum perpetuari posse credebat' (p. 37).

Matt 24. 38–39; Catharinus, p. 47). The same is happening because of the likes of Erasmus, compared now to Pelagius:

Answer us, if you can, Cosmophilus, you Pelagian; you say that this foulness of passion which makes us feel shame arises not from sin but from opinion of men!<sup>72</sup>

Erasmus argued that death came into the world because we are animals who are born, live, and die. Biological death is not the result of sin. Again, Catharinus takes St Paul literally to refute Erasmus: 'Wherefore by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; so also death passed upon all men,' ('Sicut per unum hominem peccatum in hunc mundum intravit, et per peccatum mors; ita mors per omnes homines pertransiit', Rom 5. 12; Catharinus, pp. 51–52). The conclusion? 'Either [Erasmus] points to himself as a Pelagian, or certainly an Atheist; he does not acknowledge the pernicious ruin of original sin,' ('Aut Pelagianum se indicaret, aut certe Atheon; qui originalis culpae pestilentem labem non agnoscit', p. 52).

By asserting the dignity of marriage and the lay life, Erasmus had fought hard to open wide access to a devout life and salvation. Catharinus tries to close it again. In Catharinus's list of saints, for example, there are no married persons, only celibates (p. 82). He raises the interpretation of 1 Cor. 7. 1 (note 5), about it not being good for a man to touch a woman. Erasmus would interpret it *secundum quid*, with reservations and qualifications: good in times of persecution. Catharinus says it is to be taken *absolute*: 'The Apostle said, It is good for a man, universally; he did not say for a priest, or for a bishop, or an apostle, as Cosmophilus falsely interprets'.<sup>73</sup> From the early days of the Church, Christians spurned marriage — here Jerome is specifically named (p. 55); they realized that celibacy makes us like angels, while marriage is earthly. Erasmus's harshness about so-called celibates who broke vows of chastity, kept concubines or young boys as sexual companions, puts Catharinus momentarily on the defensive. You can blame the sin, yes, but not the vow itself, because that indicates their superior state in life. Erasmus would have them marry instead; then there would be no sin and no hypocrisy. A horrifying prospect, as that would do away with the clerical caste:

<sup>72</sup> 'Responde nobis, si potes, o Pelagiane Cosmophile, qui ais hanc foeditatem unde erubescimus, non a peccato, sed ab hominum opinione profectam' (p. 49).

<sup>73</sup> 'Dixit [Apostolus] bonum est homini, universaliter; non dixit, sacerdoti, aut apostolico viro, ut Cosmophilus fallaciter interpretatur; sed absolute, bonum est homini. Nec dixit, bonum est hoc tempore, sed absolute, bonum est' (p. 75). See above, n. 5.

I believe that the state of celibacy is appropriate on all accounts for priests and bishops; it is the adornment of the Church and its revered grandeur in administering the sacraments; and the preaching of the divine word requires it by right.<sup>74</sup>

Catharinus's blind literal-mindedness re-appears towards the end of his treatise in his specific reference to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. A mark of Erasmus's insolence and wickedness, *procacitas et impietas*, is his attribution of what is indeed Gospel and Christian teaching to the foolishness of men, *stultitiae hominum*, 'as you once did in your Folly sinning against the very Holy Spirit of God; you have made yourself guilty of an eternal crime'; ('sicut et in tua Moria olim fecisti, in spiritum ipsum Dei peccans, reus factus aeterni delicti', p. 79). Catharinus continues insulting Erasmus by 'slitting his throat with his own dagger', a rhetorical metaphor meaning to use his own arguments against him by showing up contradictions. 'Tell us, I ask, in just what group do you place yourself?' ('Dic nobis, quaeso, in quonam grege te ipsum constituis?')

Surely not among the married, for you never wished to be wed; neither among the celibates or if you prefer, the Essenes, whom you vituperate so many times. In which state of life, therefore, are you placed? If perhaps you have brought back to the world some fruits of its generation, you have lived as a companion either among adulterers or violators of women, or some sort of fornicators. (Do you hear, Aporeticus? This man is nevertheless today the professor and censor of the world, and for you the dissuader of most holy celibacy!).<sup>75</sup>

Catharinus thinks he has matched Erasmus's insults against Jerome and the clergy by such vicious defamation of Erasmus. The peroration concludes with a fervent appeal to the nephew, Aporeticus, not to prefer the carnal union of matrimony to the spiritual company of Christ, the angels and (celibate) saints. Only after four hundred years would Erasmus's views gain the ascendant once more, this time with no inquisitors hanging over him.

<sup>74</sup> 'Coelibatum vero sacerdotibus et episcopis fateor necessario convenire: hoc enim decor Ecclesiae et ipsa administrandi sacramenta maiestas veneranda, ac divini verbi praedicatio suo iure exigit' (p. 57).

<sup>75</sup> 'Certe non maritorum, cum nolueris unquam esse maritus; non coelibum, et ut vis, Essenorum, quos tantopere vituperas. In quo ergo collocaris coetu? Si forte mundo fructus generationis aliquos reddidisti, certe vel adulterorum vel stupratorum, vel quovis modo fornicatorum vixisti socius. (Audin tu, Aporetice? Et hic tamen est hodie mundi doctor et censor, et tibi sanctissimi coelibatus dissuasor)' (p. 79). In his *Encomium*, Erasmus had compared the extreme practices of ascetics like Jerome to the Essenes. By calling Erasmus a *dissuasor*, Catharinus at least acknowledges the genre given to the encomium in *De conscribendis epistolis*.

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## TRANQUILLITAS ANIMI: ERASMUS AND THE QUEST FOR SPIRITUAL REASSURANCE, 1533–43

Dominic Baker-Smith

All human beings by their nature chase after leisure, seeking some place where their soul may repose; but since they place their nests among things that are useless or perishable, the more they seek calm the greater the turmoils with which they are entangled. What else is the purpose of all those tomes of the ancients, *de summo bono*, *de bonorum finibus*, and *de animi tranquillitate*, which the Greeks call *εὐδυνία*? One has built a nest in knowledge, another in idleness; one in pleasure, another in that habit of virtue they call wisdom, and others in the practice and performance of virtue. But all these, in Paul's words, 'became vain in their imaginations' [Romans 1. 21]: with their lips they promise 'quiet of mind' to others, using splendid words, but their own heart is far from being at rest. Why is this? Because they have not rejoiced in the living God [Psalm 83. 3/84. 2].<sup>1</sup>

This curt dismissal of profane wisdom occurs in the *De sarcienda ecclesiae concordia*, ostensibly an exposition of Psalm 83(84) published by Froben in 1533, one of a cluster of late works by Erasmus which aspire to mollify the tone of theological combat. It provides a sharp contrast with the inclusive optimism of the *Convivium religiosum* eleven years before: there Erasmus offers a positive role for pagan moral thought, tentatively claiming that 'perhaps the spirit of Christ is more widespread than we understand, and the company of saints includes many not in our calendar'.<sup>2</sup> But by 1525, the year after his *Διατριβή sive collatio* against Luther on freedom of the will, he is already more circumspect,

<sup>1</sup> ASD v-3, pp. 280–81, ll. 801–11; CWE 65, 168–69.

<sup>2</sup> ASD i-3, p. 251, ll. 619–20; CWE 39, 192.

noting that the human mind will only find tranquillity when it surrenders itself wholly to God through Gospel faith, *per fidem evangelicam totum se tradit Deo*.<sup>3</sup>

In the passage from the *De Concordia* Erasmus uses the image of the nest to convey the site where we place our hopes for tranquillity; it is taken straight from the psalm text, and it carries a note of security and reassurance:

Even the sparrow finds a home  
And the swallow has her nest,  
Where she rears her brood beside thy altars.

While he does use *tranquillitas* to express the idea of peace within the Church, Erasmus frequently gives it a strongly personal emphasis, an Augustinian yearning for repose. As he acknowledges in the passage just quoted, to speak of *tranquillitas animi* is to invoke an ancient tradition of spiritual culture; you may subvert traditional 'wisdom' by a Pauline appeal to the saving power of God, but the terms remain resolutely personal. From the outset of his engagement with the *philosophia Christi* Erasmus had placed great emphasis on that personal or affective response which lent validity to religious acts, and a similar alertness to subjective concerns is pivotal in the works of his last years as he endeavours to promote a policy of accommodation in the face of confessional attrition. There is, in the *De Concordia* again, that characteristic parable about a theologian, allegedly known to Erasmus, who views a man walk with friends past a crucifix, so deep in conversation that he omits to raise his hat; turning to his companions, the theologian declares, *miro zelo* — 'with extraordinary vehemence' — 'I would take an oath that that man is a Lutheran'.<sup>4</sup> For a moment we seem to be in the world of the *Moria*, but here in 1533 such reliance on externals could lead to fearful consequences.

Erasmus's lifelong distrust of literalism, whether in the handling of signs, of ceremonies, or of words, was the natural consequence of his rhetorical formation: it is the literal reading that excludes affectivity or, as we might put it, the subjective response. It was precisely his concern to allow full scope to the affective layer in religious language that made his interventions in the religious disputes of the 1520s and 30s often appear soft-centred, giving the term 'Erasmian' its regrettably gelatinous character. But if this is a cause of irritation to modern historians, to many of his contemporaries it appeared to offer — for a time at least — a private space, a nest, in which to resolve the controverted issues facing them.

<sup>3</sup> Erasmus, *In psalmum quartum concio*, in *ASD* v-2, p. 264, ll. 322–23; *CWE* 63, 261–62.

<sup>4</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 306, ll. 706–10; *CWE* 65, 205.

No one can accuse Erasmus of being over-sanguine in his expectations for the future. Writing in 1525 to Claudius Cantiuncula, in response to the suggestion that he become embroiled in debate with Oecolampadius, he remarks that the conflagration has already been out of control for some time. Both sides are attacking each other like gladiators, and were he to intervene between such mortal enemies — *hostes capitales* — he would simply be pierced full of holes.<sup>5</sup> Erasmus was clearly rather taken with this gladiatorial image, especially when he can identify himself with the rather poignant figure of the simple monk 'John' (actually his name was Telemachus) who was killed as he tried to separate two combatants in the circus. This he does in a letter of August 1531 to Julius Pflug, one in which he laments the violence of the age and compares the warring sides to Hector and Achilles, again enemies to the death.<sup>6</sup> This does not, however, prevent him from holding out some token of hope, both in the form of an 'oecumenical synod', the idea of a Council that might heal the divisions, and his rather vaguer reference to a committee of theologians, fifty or a hundred chosen from different nations and known for sanctity of life and erudition, who might be empowered to resolve the major issues.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of a Council plays its part in the accommodatory argument of the *De Concordia*: for example, the precise status of confession: is it a sacrament instituted by Christ, or is it simply a devout exercise that may prove of benefit to some? Those who hold to its divine institution 'should observe it with all the more reverence', Erasmus suggests, 'while allowing others their own view, until a sacred Council makes some more explicit pronouncement on the matter. In this way Christian concord will not be completely shattered, and the morals of the weak will not fall into license'.<sup>8</sup> Again, technical disputes *de qualificatione, de merito principali et secundario, de opere operantis et operato* may be placed in the category of human opinions, 'until a Council pronounces on these matters or leaves them to individual choice'.<sup>9</sup> As far as the eucharist is concerned, the one essential article of faith is the real presence of Christ in the sacrament: provided that there is agreement on that issue, then secondary matters of *quomodo* theology (the sort of thing that John Donne would later describe as trespassing in God's bedcham-

<sup>5</sup> Allen VI, Ep. 1616. 20–30; *CWE* 11, 288–89, 25–38.

<sup>6</sup> Allen IX, Ep. 2522. 167–77.

<sup>7</sup> Allen IX, Ep. 2522. 20–37; the Bull *Ad dominici gregis curam*, summoning a General Council to Mantua, was issued on 2 June 1536, just over a month before the death of Erasmus.

<sup>8</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 307, ll. 743–46; *CWE* 65, 206.

<sup>9</sup> *ASD* v-3, pp. 308–09, ll. 791–94; *CWE* 65, 208–09.

ber) can be left to the Council to determine.<sup>10</sup> Freedom of the will, a topic ‘more productive of thorns than fruit’, as Erasmus puts it, and one which he had publicly disputed with Luther, is stripped down to one simple formulation:

Man can do nothing of his own resources, and if he is able to accomplish anything whatsoever, he owes it all to the grace of him by whose gift we are whatever we are (*cuius munere sumus quicquid sumus*). Thus in all things we may acknowledge our weakness and glorify the Lord’s mercy.<sup>11</sup>

If it is necessary to probe any deeper then this can be done *in theologicis diatribis*, that is, in precisely the kind of learned and restrained theological discussion that Erasmus had tried — unsuccessfully — to initiate with Luther in his *Λιατριβή sive collatio de libero arbitrio*.<sup>12</sup> The thing to note here is the stress on affective response at the expense of theological precision: the formulation is rhetorical in that it aims at promoting a subjective sense of the divine mercy; whatsoever we can contribute to the process of justification is so nugatory that we might as well disregard it. This is a point we shall return to in a moment.

First, we need to stick with the Council. At the conclusion of the *De Concordia* Erasmus is careful to put his proposals in context:

My aim in these suggestions has not been to put forward my remarks as possessing certain truth, nor to anticipate the decisions of the Church, but rather that in the *interim* before a Council is summoned, we may ourselves, as far as we can, remove all causes of disagreement.<sup>13</sup>

‘Interim, dum apparatur synodus’: what exactly was Erasmus’s attitude towards a Council? He cannot have been wholly optimistic — writing to the Archbishop of Mainz in March 1533, presumably while Erasmus was at work on the *De Concordia*, Christoph Scheurl remarked, ‘The Italians say little and think even less about the Council’.<sup>14</sup> What is relevant here is that word *interim*: one may suspect that Erasmus was attracted by the idea of an ‘open’ period, when final definitions were held in check and a serious attempt at accommodation did not seem out of the question. One term that catches the eye in the *De Concordia* is the Greek word συγκατάβασις, roughly translated ‘condescension’; initially used to

<sup>10</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 310, ll. 844–48; *CWE* 65, 211.

<sup>11</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 304, ll. 625–30; *CWE* 65, 202.

<sup>12</sup> See Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform*, pp. 26–28, 44–48 and *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 311, ll. 876–81; *CWE* 65, 213.

<sup>14</sup> Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, I (1957), p. 286, n. 6.

express imperial condescension in stooping down from on high to the people, it was applied by the Greek Fathers, notably by John Chrysostom, to the divine condescension expressed in the Incarnation.<sup>15</sup> For Erasmus it is the quality of spirit by which ‘each side may make a degree of accommodation to the other, without which no concord can stand’ — ‘Accedat illa συγκατάβασις, vt vtraque pars alteri sese nonnihil accomodet, sine qua nulla constat concordia.’ As Mario Turchetti has argued, this does not imply any long-term acceptance of pluralism; rather, Erasmus is proposing an atmosphere of condescension and co-existence in which truth can emerge and dispel the fogs of prejudice and error.<sup>16</sup> In particular, such condescension is based on the recognition of human weakness: on the one hand, the necessarily provisional nature of human attempts to formulate sacred truth; on the other, that simple ignorance which must be weaned from superstition and re-directed towards a spiritual goal. This is what it is to live in the *interim*, negotiating one’s way through a range of probabilities rather than asserting a static body of truth. In the *Enarratio* of Psalm 38, completed in 1532, a year before the *De Concordia*, Erasmus reviews the various heterodox teachings to be found in the Fathers in order to provide a paradigm for his own troubled times. There may be, as he says, few examples of a confirmed heretic returning to the Church, ‘But those whose error is a merely intellectual one and whose emotions have not been seduced (Sed qui simpliciter errat intellectu, nondum corrupto affectu [...]) are easily brought back into the path.’<sup>17</sup> The implications of this are worth pondering; church membership is less to do with intellectual adherence to an abstract corpus of doctrine than with subjective commitment to a consensus of voices that has, over the centuries, constituted the Church. ‘I call heresy’, he writes in the last months of his life (interestingly enough back in the Reformed context of Basle), ‘not so much *error* but the obstinate *malice* which for the sake of some advantage is disturbing the tranquillity of the Church by perverted doctrine.’<sup>18</sup> ‘Malice’ outweighs simple ‘error’ because it disrupts *consensus* (it’s not out of place to recall

<sup>15</sup> ASD v-3, p. 304, l. 617 and p. 311, l. 884; CWE 65, 201 and 213. The term is discussed as a military metaphor for combat on equal terms in Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism*, p. 129.

<sup>16</sup> Turchetti, ‘Une question mal posée.’ For a similar stratagem in relation to the Turks see Erasmus, *De bello Turcico*, in ASD v-3, pp. 58–62; CWE 64, 238–42.

<sup>17</sup> ASD v-3, p. 157, ll. 388–89; CWE 64, 368.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Haeresim autem appello, non quemvis errorem, sed pervicacem malitiam alicuius commodi gratia perversis dogmatibus turbantem Ecclesiae tranquillitatem’, Erasmus, *Ecclesiastes*, in ASD v-5, p. 338, ll. 536–38.

here Erasmus's earlier quip to Jan Šlechta, 'as far as concerns divisions in the faith, it would be a more tolerable calamity [...] if all shared the same error').<sup>19</sup>

Here I want to return to that thorny question of free-will, as Erasmus calls it in the *De Concordia*. Reserving technical debate to experts, in the meanwhile — *interim* again, that key word — it is enough for us to agree that man can do nothing of his own resources, that anything which he does achieve is due to grace, 'so that in all things we may acknowledge our weakness and glorify the mercy of the Lord'.<sup>20</sup> Again we meet that double aspect — our weakness and the mercy of the Lord — but what we need to notice here is the way the theological formulation is designed to stir an affective response. This is typical of the way Erasmus treats the theme of justification, striving to steer a straight course between the 'Scylla of arrogance', that is to say, an inappropriate stress on merit, and the 'Charybdis of despair and indolence', in other words exaggerated solafideism.<sup>21</sup> In *Hyperaspistes* I (1526) he concludes in much the same spirit:

A person does not give thanks to God badly if he ascribes nothing to himself and attributes the sum and substance of a good work to grace, even if he does not measure with his thumb (*Adagia* IV. v, 86) how much he ought to attribute to himself, how much to God.<sup>22</sup>

This is a particularly good example of Erasmus's reluctance to treat theology as a disembodied science: his interest here is on the kind of affective relationship fostered by the formulation, in this case one of gratitude to a merciful God who accepts our puny works at an artificially inflated value. It enables him to sail as near solafideism as he can, while insisting *sotto voce* on a tiny injection of human responsibility: 'If I follow Paul and Augustine', he writes to Thomas More early in 1527, 'there is very little (*perpusillum est*) that they leave to free will'.<sup>23</sup> But the

<sup>19</sup> 'Caeterum quod ad fidei dissidium attinet, levior esset calamitas, mea sententia, si idem error haberet omnes'. Allen IV, Ep. 1039. 41–42; *CWE* 7, 121, 44–45.

<sup>20</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 304, ll. 626–30; *CWE* 65, 202.

<sup>21</sup> 'Mihi placet illorum sententia, qui nonnihil tribuunt libero arbitrio, sed gratiae plurimum. Nec enim sic erat vitanda *Scylla* arrogantiae, ut feraris in *Charybdim* desperationis aut socordiae', *De libero arbitrio*, *LB*, IX, 1247D; *CWE* 76, 86. Cf. Augustine, 'Praesumptio de justitia, quasi dextera est; cogitatio impunitatis peccatorum, quasi sinistra est', Augustine, *In psalmum xxxi Enarratio* 2, col. 258.

<sup>22</sup> 'Nec male gratias agit Deo, qui sibi nihil tribuens, summam boni operis illius gratiae fert acceptam, etiamsi non dimetiatur pollice, quantum debeat sibi tribuere, quantum Deo', *LB*, x, 1272B–C; *CWE* 76, 151.

<sup>23</sup> Allen VII, Ep. 1804. 81–82; *CWE* 13, 15, 88–89.

point is that there is *something*, however minuscule, without which grace will not operate.<sup>24</sup> When Erasmus does seem to approach the language of solafideism it is always as a rhetorical device, an attempt to emphasize the gratuitous character of God's relationship with humanity, rather than as the necessary consequence of human depravity. In his confrontation with the 'hyperbolic Doctor', as he calls Luther, he is always careful to avoid too exaggerated a reading of human weakness, however happy he may be on other occasions to give it a rhetorical thrust; in one telling riposte to Luther he charges, 'You make lost health into death.'<sup>25</sup> Luther is one of those 'who would murder free will by attributing so much to [original] sin that they make little difference between mankind and Satan.'<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that Erasmus is naively optimistic — there is that characteristically Dutch aside on human nature, 'which like the sea brings much with it you would prefer not to have',<sup>27</sup> — but he cannot accept an unreservedly negative anthropology. In the exposition of Psalm 38, the skilful lyre-player, *citharoedus*, is the one who can reconcile faith and works without exaggerating the role of either.<sup>28</sup> In fact Erasmus's stance can claim a striking precedent in Augustine's commentary on Psalm 31: 'Make neither of your own righteousness a safe-conduct to heaven, nor of God's mercy a safe-conduct to sin.'<sup>29</sup> This effort to accommodate apparently opposed views by appealing to a common affective ground is very clear in the *De Concordia*. On one hand, he can argue that *in a sense* (*quodam modo*) God makes himself our debtor by undertaking to fulfil his promises; it is, after all, a kind of justice to discharge those undertakings which you have freely promised.<sup>30</sup> This is a gesture in the direction of merits, but so phrased that it brings us back to the base note of gratitude for divine mercy. But on the other hand, faced by contrary views — 'the quality of our works has no significance, only have faith and you will be saved', or, 'whatever man's deeds he can do nothing but sin' — again,

<sup>24</sup> 'It [the effort of our will] is tiny, but God takes it in good part, however small; and beyond it you can contribute nothing, but it is still so important that unless it is there the grace of God would be in vain for you', *Hyperaspistes II*, *LB*, x, 1387C; *CWE* 77, 439. Cf. Augustine, 'Qui fecit te sine te, non te iustificat sine te', *Sermones*, 169. 13.

<sup>25</sup> 'Tu perditam sanitatem, mortem facis', Erasmus, *Hyperaspistes I*, in *LB*, x, 1332A; *CWE* 76, 289.

<sup>26</sup> Erasmus, *Hyperaspistes II*, in *LB*, x, 1355C; *CWE* 77, 373.

<sup>27</sup> Erasmus, *De Concordia*, in *ASD* v-3, p. 302, ll. 563–64; *CWE* 65, 199.

<sup>28</sup> Erasmus, *Enarratio Psalmi xxxviii*, in *ASD* v-3, p. 185, ll. 537–39; *CWE* 65, 33.

<sup>29</sup> 'Ne praesumas ad regnum de justitia tua, ne praesumas ad peccandum de misericordia Dei', Augustine, *In psalmum xxxi Enarratio* 2, col. 258.

<sup>30</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 299, ll. 445–48; *CWE* 65, 195.



he allows that these are *in a sense true* (*quae ut in aliquo sensu vera sint*), though they should not be aired in front of the ignorant. The common reality behind these apparently disparate formulations is the generosity of a God who 'accepts and reckons up in his goodness whatever he works in us or through us'.<sup>31</sup>

No doubt but that the important word here is *acceptat*, rooted as it is in the economy of *acceptatio*, which is adapted by Erasmus to fit his rhetorical model of affective devotion; human merits are acceptable to God, but on the basis of the 'fictional' value that he allows them. A necessary element of human cooperation is retained, but in such a limited way (*perpusillus*) that it in no way detracts from a powerful sense of God's mercy. I have referred to Erasmus's handling of justification as rhetorical, and yet it might be more precise to call it psychological: there is that gesture to the received tradition in the recognition of a minuscule human contribution, but the overwhelming reality is God's gratuitous forgiveness, the basis for spiritual reassurance and true peace of mind. It is the very mode of religious sensibility that is characteristic of those groups of Catholics who were drawn towards a *sola fide* formulation, whether they go down in history as Erasmians, Evangelicals, or just *spirituali*. All were natives of the pre-conciliar interim and their one common enthusiasm appears to have been the elimination of self-confidence.<sup>32</sup> With this in mind, I want to shift my focus to a single individual, conveniently categorized in a recent study as 'Ierasmiano Fiorenzo Voluseno'.<sup>33</sup> Hiding behind the Italian version of his Latin name, Volusenus, is the Scotsman Florens Wilson from Elgin, in Morayshire.

An early graduate of King's College, Aberdeen, founded by bishop Elphinstone in 1495, Wilson had studied there under the guidance of Erasmus's Parisian friend Hector Boece, dedicatee of the *Carmen de casa natalitia Jesu*.<sup>34</sup> There are signs that the curriculum there followed an Erasmian direction; when the Dane Johannes Bibliopegus visited the College in 1528 he was delighted to find disciples of Erasmus 'in ultimo pene orbis recessu'. Indeed, as Boece himself informed Erasmus, in literary studies he was as a parent to the students, who always had his *Paraphrases* of the Gospels in their hands.<sup>35</sup> Wilson's own inclination is clear from his verdict on the *recentiores*,

<sup>31</sup> *ASD* v-3, p. 304, ll. 638–47; *CWE* 65, 202.

<sup>32</sup> On the (extreme) case of Tommaso Sanfelice see Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, II (1961), 189–91; Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy*, pp. 146–48.

<sup>33</sup> Adorni-Braccesi, 'Una Città Infetta', p. 232.

<sup>34</sup> For which see Allen's remarks on Ep. 47, I, pp. 154–55.

<sup>35</sup> See Allen VII, Ep. 1996; *CWE* 14, 191–93. Boece concludes, 'Vale, et Aberdonen[se]



who are beyond number, and may stand out for their method and wit, but there is a grave lack of substance, and too often they show off their talent in trifles and games. When they treat sacred matters there are no flames, none of that force of speech (*impetus orationis*), by which the reader may be stirred to love.<sup>36</sup>

The affective emphasis is evident — this is very much in the spirit of the *Paraclesis* where transformation outweighs intellectual comprehension. So it is interesting to look at Wilson's one direct comment on Erasmus, which immediately follows his strictures on the scholastics:

He was a man of exceptional talents, of retentive memory and wide reading, most learned in both tongues, and if he had only absorbed a bit more philosophy, and had been a little more exact in his use of Latin, no writings of our time or of past ages might — in my judgement — be compared with his.<sup>37</sup>

The point about pure Latinity is not surprising in a book published in Lyons by a Francophile Scot — Wilson's own style shows a classicizing tendency foreign to Erasmus — but that remark about philosophy is intriguing.

We have no time to linger over Wilson's career, except to note the way he weaves together an interesting cluster of patronage groups within the republic of letters. By the later 1520s he appears in Cardinal Wolsey's circle of patronage, though apparently based in Paris where, together with Thomas Lupset, he was tutor to Wolsey's son, Thomas Wynter. As Wolsey's power waned, Wilson's interests (together with those of his pupil) were taken over by Cromwell and by Stephen Gardiner. While he played a walk-on part in the Anglo-French negotiations about Henry VIII's divorce, and shows sympathy with the nationalized Catholicism defended by his friend Thomas Starkey, his English connections faded after 1535. He moved south, conceivably to a more liberal intellectual environment, and after a stay in Carpentras where he taught in the school and formed a friendship with its bishop, Jacopo Sadoletto, he settled in Lyon. There he found work in the press of Sebastian Gryphius, chief source of Erasmus's

studium generale agnosce tuum, voluminibusque a te editis plus ceterorum mortalium addictum'.

<sup>36</sup> Wilson, *De animi tranquillitate dialogus*, p. 343; cf. p. 120, '[...] mirifice se torquent Theologi nostri, qui Peripateticam philosophiam cum religione copulare conantur'.

<sup>37</sup> 'Erasmus Roterodamus vir fuit felicissimi ingenii, tenacis memoriae, et plurimae lectionis, doctissimus utriusque linguae, qui si plusculum philosophiae imbibisset, et paulo accuratior fuisset in Romani sermonis puritate, nihil neque nostra, neque superiora secula vidissent, quod cum illius scriptis (ut equidem arbitror) conferendum. Singularis plane est, et in civilibus, et in Christianis moribus fingendis artifex'. Wilson, *De animi tranquillitate dialogus*, p. 344.

works in France,<sup>38</sup> and appears to have had a post, probably due to the Cardinal of Lorraine, at the humanist Collège de la Trinité where Sebastian Castello was a pupil.<sup>39</sup> There is one other important link: his relationship with Antonio Buonvisi, Luccan banker and Thomas More's intimate friend in London; Wilson is found as his guest, both in London and in Lyon, and there can be no doubt that he introduced Wilson to Lucca and its evangelical circles. Indeed, the London branch of the Buonvisi appears to have served as an important conduit of Erasmus's influence to Lucca, and if we are to believe Ortensio Lando, 'The Luccans not only read all of Erasmus but learned his words by heart'.<sup>40</sup> Since Wilson's two most important writings, the *Commentatio Theologica* of 1539 and the *De animi tranquillitate* of 1543, both published by Gryphius, are dedicated to citizens of Lucca, this has its interest. The first is dedicated to a Francesco Turretini, the second to Francesco Micheli; now Micheli, together with 'Regolo Turretini, padre di Francesco' is listed among the intimate circle of the prior of the Canons of San Frediano, Pietro Martyre Vermigli.<sup>41</sup>

We must pass by the *Commentatio*, a moving sequence of prayers in elegant Latin which contrives to evade confessional check-points, except to note its preface. This mentions the approval of Stephen Gardiner, of his secretary Germain Gardiner, of Sir John Borthwick, another Scot and *Enseigne* of the French king's Scots Guards who had publicly defended Henry's church policy before the French court, and of Lorraine's secretary Panage Hocedius, as well as sending greetings 'tota familia Bonvisiana'. In 1540 Borthwick would be condemned *in absentia* by a Scottish church court as a 'Lutheran', while four years later Germain Gardiner was executed at Tyburn as a Papist, apparently for illicit contacts with the exiled Reginald Pole.<sup>42</sup> The list is certainly an intriguing mix of religious dispositions.

<sup>38</sup> Baudrier, ed., *Bibliographie Lyonnaise*, VIII (1910), pp. 123–24; Phillips, 'Erasmus in France in the Later Sixteenth Century', pp. 248, 252.

<sup>39</sup> Guggisberg, *Sebastian Castello, 1515–63*, trans. by Gordon, pp. 11, 17, 20 and *passim*.

<sup>40</sup> Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World*, p. 116. For the London link see Adorni-Braccesi, 'Una Città Infetta', p. 53; The preface to Lando, *In Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Funus Dialogus lepidissimus*, refers to Buonvisi sponsorship of Erasmus translations, Adorni-Braccesi, 'Una Città Infetta', p. 54.

<sup>41</sup> In 1542 Vermigli reports 'una pia Chiesa di uomini fedeli', including Regolo Turretini and Francesco di Bonaventura Micheli, Adorni-Braccesi, 'Una Città Infetta', p. 118; Micheli appears as a patron of Aonio Paleario during his stay in Lucca; see also McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy*, p. 236.

<sup>42</sup> Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 205.

Francesco Micheli has some prominence in the *De animi tranquillitate*: not only is he the dedicatee and one of the interlocutors in the dialogue, but it takes place in his garden on the hill of Fourvières, overlooking Lyon. Moreover, the discussion is provoked by two disturbing items of news, the Anglo-Scots hostilities of the Solway Moss campaign (in August 1542), and the devastating flight of Vermigli, Bernardino Ochino and Paolo Lacizi to Zurich in the same month, an event which sent shock waves through Italy and must explain Micheli's presence in Lyon, a refugee from the inquisition. This gives the theme of *tranquillitas animi* special force.

In his 1531 commentary on Psalm 50, Wilson had taken verse 19, 'My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit', as a stick to beat those who rely on an exaggerated theology of works, and also those who not only deny merit to our acts but even rate them as sins. Instead he proposes a finely poised doctrine of spiritual cooperation close to that of Erasmus.<sup>43</sup> Unsurprisingly, the topic resurfaces in the *De tranquillitate* when Francesco warns Florentius that his account of human nature sounds dangerously like those who deny any merit to our works. In reply Florentius affirms his moderation and his reverence for the authority of the Church; indeed, he claims, his argument, based on the concept of *acceptatio* — God's generous acceptance of our works at a fictional value, ennobles our works, giving them a role in our sanctification, but a spiritual one, far removed from the mercantile abuse of indulgences.<sup>44</sup> Works are thus admitted, but the real emphasis falls on the trust we must place in God. This is why Wilson stresses the importance of the love of God, which must drive out fear; the latter, he suggests, arises from uncertainty about our acceptability, and to counter it he argues fiercely for our assurance of salvation. To doubt this is to doubt God's goodness. The line he follows here has much in common with the writings of Italian *spirituali*, in particular the *Beneficio di Cristo*, but for support he appeals (rightly, as it happens) to the more orthodox figure of John Fisher.<sup>45</sup> It was, however, a formula that Trent would anathematize.

At the heart of the *De tranquillitate* is an allegorical dream, related by Florentius, in which the dreamer discovers a splendid temple, adorned with

<sup>43</sup> 'Hic etiam locus eorum temeritatem refellit, qui non modo meriti rationem operibus nostris adimunt, sed etiam peccata esse volunt'. Wilson, *In psalmum nobis 50 enarratio*, p. 27.

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, *De animi tranquillitate dialogus*, pp. 364–66.

<sup>45</sup> Wilson, *De animi tranquillitate dialogus*, pp. 383–85. Cf *Beneficio di Giesu Cristo Crocifisso*, in *Opuscoli e Lettere di Riformatori*, ed. by Paladino, 1 (1913), p. 20 ('Oh quanto è grave questo peccato della incredulità [...]').; on Fisher's 'Lutheran' drift over certainty of grace see Rex, *The Theology of John Fisher*, p. 120.

inscribed pillars, and presided over by the figure of Democritus, author of *Peri Euthumies*. This is the temple of pagan *tranquillitas* and the inscribed aphorisms are the essence of those ancient tomes which Erasmus dismissed in the *De Concordia*. Even so, the dreamer is dissatisfied and — prompted by grace, a point that Wilson is at pains to emphasize — he falls to his knees in prayer, to be rewarded with the sight of a second, and finer, temple. Here the custodian, his face lit with a heavenly majesty, is identified as St Paul, ‘Christianae philosophiae longe haud dubie & scientissimum interpretem, & fortissimum vindicem’. Over the entrance are the words of Psalm 83, the psalm of Erasmus’s *De Concordia*, ‘Beati qui habitant in domo tua’, and on the flanking columns, ‘Know thyself’ (ΓΝΩΘΙ Σ’ΑΥΤΟΝ) and ‘Know thy God’ (ΓΝΩΘΙ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ). Rather than human dignity (a theme Wilson celebrates elsewhere), self-knowledge here means recognition of our weakness, which is countered again by awareness of a loving God. St Paul directs the dreamer to the figure on the architrave, a young man crowned with thorns, his hands and feet pierced and his body covered with wounds. He alone offers ‘certissima & compendiaria ad tranquillitatem sempiternam via.’<sup>46</sup> Stirred by Paul’s burning words, the dreamer wakes overwhelmed with joy.

In so far as it is possible to gauge the intention of Wilson’s book, it seems to offer the fugitive Micheli, and those like him, some accommodation between the received consensus of tradition and the personal assurance of evangelical faith.<sup>47</sup> In this he remains close to the spirit of the *De Concordia*, but already a warning note had been sounded at Regensburg in 1541 where the vulnerability of such a stance had been exposed. No further work by Wilson survives, apart from a single letter: planning to visit England on his way to Scotland in 1546, he approached Sadoletto, by now in Rome, for counsel. Sadoletto’s response is — understandably — vague, urging him in general terms to remain loyal to the timeless consensus of the Church, ‘I persuade, exhort and warn you to tread in the footsteps of our forefathers [...] and so far as you are able, to keep those with whom you live true to the faith.’<sup>48</sup> Wilson’s reply, dated 21 July 1546, coincides with the debate on

<sup>46</sup> Wilson, *De animi tranquillitate dialogus*, p. 370; cf. ‘Nunc ad infirmorum humilitatem sese deicens profitetur se nihil scire praeter Jesum, et hunc crucifixum’. Erasmus, *Ratio*, in Holborn, p. 224, ll. 3–5.

<sup>47</sup> Micheli appears to have settled in Lyon and followed an outwardly orthodox life, but questions about his beliefs were raised in 1551 and by 1555 he had moved to Geneva: Berengo, *Nobili e Mercanti nella Lucca del Cinquecento*, pp. 436–38. Adorni-Braccesi, ‘Una Città Infetta’, p. 236, detects ‘una sorta di “nicodemismo”’ among the Luccan community in Lyon.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Suadeo, hortor, et moneo, ut majorum nostrorum vestigiis insistas, atque ea quae statuit, decrevit, et tot iam saeculis observavit Ecclesia [...] utque haec quae tibi a Deo data sunt, ingenii,

justification at Trent (the debate opened on 21 June and by the following January the 'evangelical' position had been condemned) and it conveys his anxiety. He had wished to ask Sadoletto about controverted issues, especially as he finds among them (the Reformers) doctrines 'which are not wholly displeasing to me'; but this would be open to misconstruction, so he is silent. 'Truly, I promise that to the very end you will never hear that your Florentius has used anything but moderation in all controversy, for so my temper and upbringing, as well as your counsel, have always directed me'.<sup>49</sup> Seen against the background of the Tridentine debate, Wilson's attitude is a moving and not unimpressive expression of what we might call the interim mentality — one which, in its quest for reassurance, linked the consensus of tradition with a rhetoric of human incapacity and divine mercy. Certainly Erasmus would not have disowned it.

doctrinaeque munera, ad eos quibuscum vives, in fide et vera religione (quantum in te erit) continendos, sedulo ut Christiano homine dignum est conferas'. Sadoletto, *Opera*, II, 134.

<sup>49</sup> 'Verum illud ad extremum de meipso tibi recipio nunquam fore ut non audias Florentium tuum singulari in omni controversia uti moderatione. Eo enim me, et natura mea et institutio, et consilia denique tua (quae equidem pro eo ac debeo magni facio) semper ferunt'. Città della Vaticana, Biblioteca Vaticana, MS Barb. lat. 6509, fol. 27<sup>v</sup>.

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## JOSEPH HALL, THOMAS FULLER, AND THE ERASMIAN *VIA MEDIA* IN EARLY STUART ENGLAND

Gregory Dodds

In 1642, Thomas Fuller wrote that ‘moderate men are commonly crush’d betwixt the extreme parties on both sides’.<sup>1</sup> Fuller, who saw himself as a moderate in the line of Erasmus, believed that since he, like Erasmus, was a proponent of a religious *via media* he was vulnerable to attacks from all sides. Certainly, it did become increasingly difficult for self-espoused moderates, such as Fuller, to maintain positions of neutrality and moderation as England moved toward civil war. The era of the English civil war, when religious opinions hardened into incommensurable ideologies, is a particularly interesting period for examining the rhetorical history of peace and moderation. Many of those who argued for moderation acknowledged Erasmus and his ideas as an inspiration. Focusing on the legacy of Desiderius Erasmus, as well as on the condemnation of moderate ideology, provides a more nuanced interpretation of the religious conflicts that eventually led to war.

There is, and has been for some time, a robust debate over the causes of the English civil war with an important component focusing on the nature of Puritanism, Arminianism and the fabled English *via media*. A now rather well-established revisionist consensus sees Arminianism as an ‘innovation’ that upset the conservative Calvinist *status quo*.<sup>2</sup> In this view, Arminianism challenged

<sup>1</sup> Fuller, *The Holy State*, p. 206. Roger L’Estrange later modified Fuller’s words and wrote that Erasmus was ‘crush’d betwixt the Two Extremes’. L’Estrange, *Select Colloquies Out of Erasmus Roterodamus*, sigs. A3<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> See Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*. Also see Tyacke, ‘The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered’.

Calvinist predestinarian theology, which the vast majority of English people and divines perceived as Protestant orthodoxy. When supported by Charles I and Archbishop Laud and then coupled with both heightened religious ceremonialism and greater enforcement of conformity, Arminianism became a central cause of the religious animosities and fears that pushed England towards religious violence. A few historians, however, including Peter White, Julian Davies, and Kevin Sharpe, have argued that English Arminianism was part of a long-standing Elizabethan and early Stuart *via media*. Although Laud and Charles stressed order and conformity to a greater degree than Elizabeth or James, the Caroline church did not diverge significantly from traditional post-Reformation English theology and ecclesiology. Laud was far less concerned about predestination, than with maintaining order and conformity.<sup>3</sup> Absent from both interpretations, however, is an appreciation for the legacy of Erasmian theology and rhetoric in Elizabethan and early Stuart England. It might appear that the existence of a strong Erasmian tradition in England would support the notion of a long-standing place for Arminian, free will, or Erasmian theology within the English Church. All one has to do is examine the English translation of Erasmus's *Paraphrases* or the many other Erasmian texts printed during the Elizabethan era to argue that Erasmian theology was a precursor, or perhaps even a necessary precondition, for later English Arminianism. Seventeenth-century anti-Calvinists, such as Thomas Bilson, Peter Heylyn, John Plaifere, and many divines during the Restoration recognized this and wrote about Erasmus and the *Paraphrases* to counter puritan claims of Arminian innovation.<sup>4</sup> According to anti-Calvinists, the official injunctions regarding the printing and distribution of Erasmus's *Paraphrases* by both Edward VI and Elizabeth I proved that the English Reformation was not opposed to free will theology.<sup>5</sup> Some seventeenth-century authors went so far as to claim

<sup>3</sup> See White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic*; Bernard, 'The Church of England'; Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*. Also see Kevin Sharpe's review of the historiographical conflict, in which he defends his own work as well as that of Peter White and, especially, Julian Davies: Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England*, pp. 348–57.

<sup>4</sup> See Dodds, 'Erasmus' *Paraphrases*'.

<sup>5</sup> Heylyn, *Historia Quinqu-Articularis*, p. 109. Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, p. 21. Thomas Bilson wrote: 'Our Church [...] doth approue likewise, and appoint Erasmus Paraphrase to be openly in the Church for euery man, that doubteth of any thing in the newe Testament, to reade for his instruction; and yet you will not take euery word in Erasmus Paraphrase for the publike Doctrine of the Church of England. For so you should soone exclude the most of your new conceits'. Bilson, *The Suruey of Christs Sufferings*, p. 288. Two examples of similar appeals to the *Paraphrases* from the post-Restoration era are found in Pierce, *An Impartial Inquiry into the Nature of Sin*, p. 174; and Stillingfleet, *Several Conferences*, p. 119.

that the English Reformation was fundamentally Erasmian in nature.<sup>6</sup> It is also not hard to find an Erasmian style in pre-Arminians, such as Richard Hooker and John Young, as well as Arminians proper, including Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Montague, and Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland. Bruce Mansfield has highlighted the influence of Erasmus on the Falkland circle at Great Tew as well as on the Dutch Arminians.<sup>7</sup> However, a careful scrutiny of Erasmian publications also indicates a general English uneasiness with Erasmian theology, a theology which was clearly not congruent with mainstream English Calvinism. In fact, a number of Erasmian publications were heavily reworked to make them fit better with Calvinist theology.<sup>8</sup> There is abundant evidence pointing to the dominance of Calvinism and the marginal nature of an Erasmian theological worldview from the last decades of the sixteenth century through the reign of James I. So, while looking at Erasmus's legacy among Arminians complicates the notion of Calvinist consensus and orthodoxy, it does not necessarily alter it. More significant than an examination of Erasmus and anti-Calvinists are the differing opinions about Erasmus among English Calvinists. The diverse views of Erasmus suggest a long-term ideological struggle, not simply between predestinarians and Arminians, but a deeper struggle over the cultural meaning and value of religious 'peace', 'consensus', and 'moderation'.

Joseph Hall was a member of the English delegation sent to condemn Arminianism at the Synod of Dordt and was chosen not only for his clerical standing, but also for his well-known, if self-proclaimed, moderation. James I wanted to take a very hard line against Arminianism while doing so in the name of moderation and peace. Hall was a natural participant, given James's agenda, although he left the conference early for health reasons.<sup>9</sup> Hall was quite familiar with Erasmus's writings, especially Erasmus's epistles and, in imitation, was the first English man to publish his own letters.<sup>10</sup> There are also extended quotations from

<sup>6</sup> See Stillingfleet, *Several Conferences*, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> Mansfield, *Phoenix of his Age*, pp. 115–51.

<sup>8</sup> See my analysis of Calvinist manipulations and augmentations of Erasmian *Colloquies* in Dodds, "Puritane Punke:" Rewriting Erasmus.

<sup>9</sup> Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom*, p. 266.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Huntley points out, referring to Joseph Hall, that 'it is fitting that a Cambridge man became the first Englishman to publish his own epistles, for it was from his tower in Queens', Cambridge, that Erasmus in 1516 published the *Epistolae Erasmi*'. See Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall*, p. 61.

Erasmus in Hall's texts.<sup>11</sup> While Hall, as a committed predestinarian Calvinist, was at odds with some of Erasmus's theological positions, most notably regarding grace, he was a great admirer of Erasmus, routinely cited Erasmus, and generally positioned himself as a moderate, peace-loving, theologian.<sup>12</sup> He also found moderate Erasmian rhetoric useful as he attempted to construct a *via media* for the English Church between the extremes of popery and presbyterian Puritanism.<sup>13</sup>

Hall agreed with Erasmus that peace and concord were imperative for Christians, and that public theological disputations were dangerous, not because they sought truth, but because the search for lesser truths might endanger the greater truths of Christian peace and charity.<sup>14</sup> In his *Meditations and Vows*, Hall wrote regarding such controversies:

Since I see this is daily increased with partaking, I will behold it with sorrow; and meddle no otherwise than by prayers to God, and intreaties to men and seeking my own safety, and the peace of the Church, in the freedom of my thought, and silence of my tongue.<sup>15</sup>

Hall, however, had a hard time keeping his vow and was unable to silence his tongue. Like Erasmus, Hall argued that theological disputations, carried out within the public sphere, would destroy religious unity and that there should be silence on major controversies, such as predestination. Yet, in writing treatises calling for an end to disputation he sought to demonstrate that those who were causing religious controversies in England were Arminians, Catholics, presbyterians, and various sectarians. They were the noisy ones who should be

<sup>11</sup> Hall, *Works* (1628), pp. 816–17.

<sup>12</sup> While Joseph Hall proposed a *via media* that could handle some flexibility in the way predestination was discussed, he was willing to die for the conclusions established at the Synod of Dort. See Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 418n.

<sup>13</sup> For direct references to Erasmus in the 1628 edition of *The Works of Joseph Hall*, see pp. 554, 659, 699, 733–34, 736, 748, 753, 755, 770, 775, and 816–17.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Hall often cited peace and concord as central tenets of the Christian faith and echoed language similar to Erasmus's well-known phrase that 'the sum and substance of our religion is peace and concord': Ep. 1334. 217 (Allen v, p. 177) to Jean de Carondelet, archbishop of Palermo, quoted in Olin, *Six Essays on Erasmus*, p. 100. In the English *Paraphrases* Erasmus similarly wrote that 'the general rule and summe of your profession is peace and concorde': *Paraphrases*, I, sig. G5<sup>v</sup>. Rom. ch. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Hall, *Works* (1628), p. 29. Hall's words are an echo not only of Erasmus, but earlier texts such as Adams, *Eirenopolis*, pp. 5–6, 10–11, 16–17, 22, and 151. In a work built on the model of Erasmus's *Complaint of Peace*, Thomas Adams maintained that 'peace and concord' were the greatest good and those who were opposed to peace were the enemies of Christianity.

quiet. Those who, like himself, were episcopal Calvinists, were in the moderate, peaceful, consensual and non-combative middle. Hall was convinced that Arminians such as Richard Montague were introducing radical 'innovations' that brought disunity to Calvinist England. Hall could thus claim that moderates held their tongues while in the very act of writing to condemn others who failed to do the same. This was the same approach used by Erasmus, but Hall seems less aware that he was violating his own principles than Erasmus had been in his diatribe against Luther.<sup>16</sup> In both cases, however, we must be careful not to mistake self-espoused moderation and the condemnation of confrontation for neutrality or as a representation of an actual peaceful middle ground. As both Erasmus and Hall knew well, the language of peace, love, and moderation was a powerful rhetorical tool for marginalizing an opponent as a dangerous extremist.

Hall argued often for theological and religious flexibility in things that were not essential for salvation. However, for beliefs and practices that Hall believed were not essential, he took an Erasmian approach and personally submitted his judgement to that of his church: 'In all those verities which are disputable, and free for discourse, let me ever be swayed by the sacred authority of that Orthodoxe Church wherein I live.'<sup>17</sup> Since a matter was open to interpretation Hall believed that he should not differ with tradition.<sup>18</sup> He did note, however, that Erasmus had gone too far in submitting his judgement to the Roman Church and that there were limits to how much heresy a Christian should accept in a church. Hall wrote:

It is possible I confesse to goe too farre, in our reliance upon others judgements; I cannot like that of *Erasmus*, who professeth to his *Bilibaldus*, that hee ascribed so much to the authority of the Church, that if she had thought meet to have allowed the opinion of *Arius*, or *Pelagius*, hee should have assented thereunto; This is too much servility; In these manifest and maine truthes, we have no reason to make

<sup>16</sup> In *De Libero Arbitrio*, at the end of his preface and again at the beginning of the section on the Old Testament, Erasmus wrote that he hoped his readers would realize the *adiaphoric* nature of the controversy and not feel the need to read the rest of the treatise. Erasmus, *A Discussion of Free Will*, in *CWE* 76, 14, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Hall, *Christian Moderation*, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Laudian polemicists, such as Peter Heylyn, shifted traditional conformist rhetoric by arguing that the episcopacy and certain ceremonies were essential. Conformists, from Whitgift onward, maintained that since ecclesiology and ceremonies were *adiaphora* the church could compel conformity in these areas. Interestingly, both presbyterians and Laudians agreed that church structure was decreed by God. Cf. Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century*, pp. 146–47.

flesh our arme. If all the world should face me downe, that the Sunne shines not, I would be pardoned to beleewe my eyes.<sup>19</sup>

Hall's mention of *Pelagius* is telling, as is his concluding appeal to empirical evidence. Though Hall wrote of Erasmus here, he also may have been thinking of Ignatius Loyola's 'Rules' for thinking with the church. In these rules, which accompanied the *Spiritual Exercises*, Loyola wrote, 'To maintain a right mind in all things we must always maintain that the white I see, I shall believe to be black, if the hierarchical Church so stipulates.'<sup>20</sup> Hall insisted that he would 'believe my eyes'. Despite Hall's caution regarding the Erasmian approach to the Roman Church, Hall was basically following Erasmus's principles and specifically referred to Erasmus:

Pertinacy is the next, which indeed is the onely thing that makes an hereticke; Let the error be haynous, yet if there be not a perverse stiffenesse in the maintenance of it, it amounts not to the crime of heresie: much lesse is it so in case of a relenting schisme; It was a good speech of *Erasmus*: I cannot be an hereticke unlesse I will; and since I neither am, nor will be so, I will endeavour to use the matter so, as that I may not be thought to be one.<sup>21</sup>

Hall understood that attaining absolute unity was impossible. What he, like Erasmus, hoped to find was public peace and concord, while allowing private variety in nonessentials. Hall hoped that the English Church could find unity without requiring absolute uniformity of belief. He wrote, 'It is a true rule of *Erasmus*, that *generous spirits would be reclaimed by teaching, not by compulsion*'.<sup>22</sup> Reminiscent of Erasmus's words in *De Libero Arbitrio* and elsewhere, Hall stated, 'Some quiet error may be better than some unruly truth'.<sup>23</sup> He then, rhetorically, asked, 'Who binds us to speak all we think?'<sup>24</sup> Hall specifically applied this sentiment to the

<sup>19</sup> Hall, *Christian Moderation*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>20</sup> Ignacio de Loyola, *Personal Writings*, p. 358.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, *Christian Moderation*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>22</sup> Hall, *The Contemplations upon the History of the New Testament*, p. 379.

<sup>23</sup> Hall, *Works* (1628), p. 396. This comes from a published letter to Jonas Reigesbergius about the turmoil being stirred up by Arminianism. Even if predestination turned out to be wrong, Hall suggested that a public Arminian challenge would destroy the peace and unity of the church. This was Erasmus's argument too, but reversed. It was predestination, rather than free will, which was dangerous even if it was true. Among numerous comments along these lines, Erasmus wrote that 'there are certain errors which it would be less harmful to overlook than to uproot'. Erasmus, *A Discussion of Free Will*, in *CWE* 76, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Hall, *Works* (1628), p. 396.

controversies over the human will. Like Erasmus, he stated that peace was the greatest mark of true Christianity and disunity the mark of heresy. Not surprisingly then, Hall positioned the English Church as the foundation of peace and unity, while those who challenged his conception of the English Church (Romanists, Arminians, Socinians, presbyterians, and sectarians) were disturbing the peace of the church through their innovations. Very astutely and echoing Erasmus's adiaphoric arguments against Luther, Hall argued that the theological issues supposedly destroying unity within the Church of England were really only secondary issues. According to Hall:

With some of ours, the controuersie is not about any solid lims of Christian Faith, but only of the very skin; with some others, not about the skin, but the garment rather, nor about the garment itselfe neither, but of the very hemme. There are certain scholastical opinions of a middle ranke, meere Theological Corollaries, or perhaps some outward ceremonies, wherein we dissent: Principles of Christian Religion there are not.<sup>25</sup>

From Hall's perspective, most disputes were about ceremonies and corollaries. These should be considered *adiaphora*, or indifferent to salvation, and thus, pragmatically, under the jurisdiction of the church. Differences of opinion on these nonessential issues did not justify nonconformity. He then concluded, 'Finally, our differences are no greater, than were those of old, among the holy Fathers of the church, whose quarrells notwithstanding are not so odiously blazoned by posteritie.'<sup>26</sup> Hall was familiar with Erasmus's argument that theological controversies should not destroy Christian unity given that there was also theological diversity in the early church.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Erasmus made precisely this point in his preface to his paraphrase on John, which was included in the official English translation, and in his *Catechismus*, which was also translated into English.<sup>28</sup>

Hall turned to Erasmus in one of his most detailed depictions of the proper *via media*. Extremists, in Hall's mind, wanted a pure church without any internal divisions. However, according to Hall, '*Erasmus* hath truly observed, there is

<sup>25</sup> Hall, *Works* (1628), p. 562.

<sup>26</sup> Hall, *Works* (1628), p. 562.

<sup>27</sup> See Backus, 'Erasmus and the Spirituality of the Early Church', pp. 100, 110–14.

<sup>28</sup> In the preface to John, Erasmus wrote, referring to the church Fathers, 'For they themselves do often discent among themselves'. Erasmus, *The First Tome*, sig. O5<sup>v</sup>. Preface to John. In the *Catechismus* Erasmus similarly wrote that synods and canonized authorities 'do somtymes disagree not onely one of them from another but also do vary from theyr owne selues'. Erasmus, *Catechismus*, sig. O1<sup>v</sup>.



nothing so happy in these humane things wherein there are not some intermixtures of distemper'.<sup>29</sup> There would always be differences of opinion and a unified church needed to accept some diversity. Once again, however, Hall felt the need to warn readers that the errors of Roman Catholicism were in essential areas of Christian belief. Clearly, Hall was in a rather difficult position. He wanted to argue for a high degree of theological flexibility without minimizing the importance of the English Reformation. In general, though, Hall bemoaned how variety of opinion led to conflict and the destruction of the Christian Church. In writing his 'second rule of moderation', Hall again turned to Erasmus when he wrote:

It was the observation of wise and learned *Erasmus*, which have runne oftentimes in my thoughts; *the Doctrine of the Church*, saith he, *which at the first was free from quarrels, began to depend upon the aydes, and defenses of Philosophy [...]. At last, it came to the sophisticall contentions; thousands of new Articles brake forth; From thence it grew to terrors and threats; and since to blowes.*<sup>30</sup>

Hall then added, in his own voice, 'Lo, the miserable degrees of the Churches disturbance; we have almost lost religion and peace in the multiplicity of opinions'.<sup>31</sup> Hall's polemical rival, the Arminian Richard Montague, who also saw Erasmus as 'a man of our side', meaning the Arminian side, had used similar rhetoric in his controversial text *A Gagg for the new Gospel?* In this treatise, Montague argued that since the issue of free will was *adiaphora*, alternatives to Calvinist theology should be accepted within the English Church.<sup>32</sup> Hall reversed this by arguing that as the issue was not essential, new innovations and a 'multiplicity of opinions' should not be allowed to disrupt publicly the peace of the English Church.<sup>33</sup> Arminians should not destroy English religious unity and consensus. Hall wrote:

<sup>29</sup> Hall, *The Contemplations upon the History of the New Testament*, p. 375.

<sup>30</sup> Hall, *Christian Moderation*, pp. 26–27. Hall noted the Erasmian source in the margin, 'Eras praefat. ad opera Hilarii'.

<sup>31</sup> Hall, *Christian Moderation*, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> At one point in his *Gagg*, in a passage that could have been written by Hall, Montague wrote, 'There are *publique Resolutions* held of all, and *priuete opinions* maintained by some, by men particular in their owne Conceits: and Societies in a more generall agreement in things indifferent, not *de fide*, or if yet of a looser and lower tye, and alloy. As those are proposed, resolved, maintained, tendred and commanded: So the other are free, and disputed and questioned, not enioyned as *de fide*, or Subscribed, because Problematicall, and no more'. Montague, *A Gagg for the New Gospell?*, Letter to the Reader.

<sup>33</sup> Hall did agree that both sides, not just the anti-Calvinist side, should be silent on the



I may thinke one thing, another man may thinke another, I doe neither prescribe to him nor he to me; Learned and wise *Erasmus* observed well; there are many things which doe no harme, while they are neglected, but when they are once stirred, raise up grievous Tragedies in the world.<sup>34</sup>

Did readers notice Hall's routine use of Erasmus? In the Huntington Library's 1628 copy of *The Works of Joseph Hall*, a reader marked some of Hall's allusions to Erasmus and even wrote some notes about Erasmus and Luther on the blank final page of the book: 'Res et verba Philippus; Res sine verbis Lutherus, verba sine re Erasmus'.<sup>35</sup> The quotation is from Hall's text, but comes from text originally placed by Luther over the door to his study.<sup>36</sup> The phrase fits well with Hall's admiration for Erasmian rhetoric and moderation despite his differences with Erasmus's theology. This particular reader also tended to underline passages dealing with *adiaphora* and how religious practice could legitimately change based on different cultures. Fortunately, the reader included a date with the comments: 1631. It is important, I believe, that we have a record indicating that a reader of Hall's works was particularly interested in Hall's interpretation of *adiaphora*, moderation, and Hall's usage of Erasmus within the cultural and religious discourse of early Stuart England.

It might be tempting to see in Hall's moderate thought evidence supporting the existence within England of a broadly based *via media*. Rather than pitting Calvinists against Arminians and vice versa, Peter White maintains that theological issues such as predestination were not terribly divisive and sees Hall's thirty page pamphlet, *Via Media: The Way of Peace*, and his two books on

issue of predestination. See White, 'The *via media* in the Early Stuart Church'; and Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church*, p. 226.

<sup>34</sup> Hall, *Christian Moderation*, pp. 52–53.

<sup>35</sup> The reader was quoting from Hall, *Works* (1628), p. 554. Hall's translation follows the Latin and reads, 'Melancton was words and matter; Luther, matter without words; Erasmus, words without matter; Every one hath his own share'. Hall was not attacking Erasmus with this phrase, but arguing that God had given different types of gifts to different people. The handwriting on the final page matches the writing on the title page, which includes a signature and the date 1631. See Huntington Library copy of Hall, *Works* (1628), title page, pp. 25–26, and last unprinted pages. Huntington Library reference number: 601473–73a.

<sup>36</sup> In 1640, Donald Lupton echoed Hall and provided more detail about the origin of the phrase: 'Luther caused to be painted over his study doore. *Verba sine rebus*, Erasmus: *Res sine verbis*, Lutherus: *nec res, nec verba*, Carolastadius: *et res et verba*, Melancthon'. Lupton, *The Glory of Their Times*, p. 140.

moderation as examples.<sup>37</sup> In this interpretation, Hall was a Calvinist, but one who sought a moderate English Church that was little different from that sought by Arminians such as Lancelot Andrewes. The English Church occupied a theologically flexible middle ground that could accommodate a variety of views on predestination.<sup>38</sup> However, such rhetoric, within the context of post-Reformation England, was used to position one's own religious vision within the 'moderate' middle and to designate opponents as immoderate and therefore dangerous or, even worse, irrelevant. Hall certainly was not the first to manipulate this rhetoric to suit his desired ends, but he readapted this well-known rhetorical style to delegitimize English anti-Calvinism. This is not to cast doubt on Hall's sincerity. Undoubtedly, Hall desired an English Church where moderation and unity would be perceived as being of far greater worth than public theological disputations. But to locate oneself in the moderate middle was always polemical, at times quite aggressively so. The use of 'moderate' rhetoric could actually intensify the controversies within English religion since polemical opponents understood precisely how they were being marginalized. It is ironic, but true nonetheless, that the language of unity often resulted in disunity.

Peter Lake has pointed out that Hall's irenic rhetoric was highly polemical and specifically designed to avoid Arminian interpretations in Montague's works. Lake demonstrates that Hall sought to reposition the writings of Richard Montague within the acceptable rhetoric of English Calvinism and that in doing so he was seeking to repudiate Arminian readings that could potentially destabilize the English Church. In fact, Hall also used the language of peace and unity to condemn popery and to support English engagement in the Thirty Years War.<sup>39</sup> Lake writes:

The aims of Hall's book were, therefore, *both* irenic and polemical; they constituted a no doubt sincere attempt to find the position upon which the greatest number of people could agree *and* an attempt to close down many of the more objectionably Arminian readings that Montague's works invited.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic*, pp. 234–36. White is correct that the language of the *via media* was part of a long-standing English tradition. However, Hall's *Via Media: The Way of Peace* specifically sought to accommodate, minimize, and marginalize the arguments of Overall, Montague and other English critics of predestination within the body of English Calvinism. As such, even a work so entitled as Hall, *Via Media: The Way of Peace*, is best seen as part of an aggressive polemical battle for the soul of the English church.

<sup>38</sup> See Bernard, 'The Church of England'; White, 'The *via media* in the Early Stuart Church'.

<sup>39</sup> Lake, 'The Moderate and Irenic Case for Religious War', pp. 62–67.

<sup>40</sup> Lake, 'The Moderate and Irenic Case for Religious War', p. 78.

As seems to be perennially the case, Hall called for war using the language of peace and tolerance. From Hall's perspective, English moderation needed to fight Catholic extremism. Arminianism was a step towards Catholicism and away from moderation. No rhetorical argument can be understood simply by listening only to the text. Hall's texts are not self-referential; they have a subtext that is only understood by examining the political and religious context in which they were written. The Thirty Years War sharpened theological distinctions in England. There is also another context in which Hall was operating — the long-term clash of religious worldviews over the relative importance of peace, truth and the scope of allowable variety within the English Church.

Both Calvinists and Arminians knew precisely how to use the rhetoric of peace, concord, and moderation. Theological opponents therefore understood how the language of moderation was used to isolate and marginalize their positions.<sup>41</sup> And, naturally, Hall was attacked for his moderation, though he claimed to welcome such criticism.<sup>42</sup> The similarity of the vocabulary used by some Calvinists and Arminians from opposing sides of the theological spectrum, including the language of the *via media*, does not indicate the actual existence of a peaceful middle space which both could happily share. This had become a serious struggle over the nature of the English Church. However, a deeper rift was developing between those who chose to use the rhetoric of moderation and those who increasingly saw appeals to moderation, from any perspective, as Laodicean lukewarmness and a threat to Protestant truth.<sup>43</sup> Some zealous puritans described those who followed moderation as 'neuters' and saw them as little help to the godly cause of truth. It was not only the godly, however, who denounced moderates like Hall. Hall also found himself accused by the other side, during Charles I's reign, for not fully enforcing Laudian conformity.<sup>44</sup> When war became a real-

<sup>41</sup> Dan Steere notes that Hall's attempt to find balance within his version of the *via media* led to 'attacks from all sides' and a 'storm of controversy'. Calls for moderation based on the ideal of unity and peace often led to deeply divisive polemical battles. See Steere, "For the Peace of Both", p. 759.

<sup>42</sup> In a 1641 Sermon, Hall told his audience that there is no religious position that will not be attacked. Even if a man 'stand for the anciently received rites and government, he is a time-serving Formalist [...]. In the mean time, who can escape free? Surely I, that taxe both shall be sure to be censured of both: shall be? yes, am, to purpose; and therein I joy, yea and will joy'. Hall, *The Shaking of the Olive-Tree*, p. 82.

<sup>43</sup> Revelation 3. 14–16.

<sup>44</sup> Fincham, 'Episcopal Government 1603–1640', p. 91. For Hall's incongruity with Laudianism see Fincham and Lake, 'Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism'.

ity in England, however, Hall stood with the Arminian Charles I. So did Thomas Fuller, another Calvinist admirer of Erasmus.

Thomas Fuller was influenced by Erasmus from an early age. Of course, this was also the case for many young English men given the pervasive educational use of Erasmus's *Colloquies* and the wide reading of Erasmian texts at university. In a somewhat odd reference to the ubiquity of the *Colloquies*, Fuller once wrote that in the Church of Rome 'Satans Language is as Familiar as *Erasmus* his *Dialogues* are well known to men'.<sup>45</sup> Fuller was especially drawn to Erasmus, whom he called the 'the morning-starre of learning' and was quite proud to attend Queens' College, Cambridge, where Erasmus had lived and taught.<sup>46</sup> Fuller also took an individual's familiarity with Erasmus as 'evidence of his learning'.<sup>47</sup> His father was parson at Aldwincles, which contained a copy of Erasmus's *Paraphrases*. Later, Fuller would often cite from Erasmus's works and, in general, saw himself as writing from an Erasmian perspective.<sup>48</sup>

Fuller became well known for his moderation and unwillingness to be seen as belonging to a particular political or religious party. By the late 1630s and 1640s, however, such a position was becoming increasingly difficult. In 1642, Fuller attempted, in *The Holy State*, to reinterpret the *via media* from a Joseph Hall type of middle ground that was essentially Calvinist to a middle space that was big enough to encompass the theologies of both Calvin and Arminius. While there is no doubt that Fuller, a student of the great puritan Samuel Ward, was a strong anti-Catholic Calvinist, he argued for an Erasmian understanding of nonessentials and reiterated that peace and charity were superior Christian truths that would be lost if disunity prevailed.<sup>49</sup> Not surprisingly, Fuller's *via media* was publicly attacked from both sides. His routine calls for peace were seen by puritans, correctly, as opposition to Presbyterianism and, later, the parliamentary cause. On the other hand, Arminians, such as the Laudian polemicist Peter Heylyn, saw Fuller's moderation as lukewarmness.<sup>50</sup> Both sides viewed him as rather weak in

<sup>45</sup> Fuller, *An Historical Narrative*, p. 123. This work was bound with *The History of the Worthies of England*.

<sup>46</sup> Fuller, *The Holy State*, p. 79. For Fuller's extensive comments on Erasmus and Queens' College see Fuller, *The History of the University of Cambridge*, p. 82. Fuller's *The History of the University of Cambridge* was appended to Fuller, *Church-History of Britain*.

<sup>47</sup> Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, p. 95.

<sup>48</sup> See Bailey, *The Life of Thomas Fuller*, pp. 30, 75, 528.

<sup>49</sup> Like Joseph Hall, Fuller's Calvinism tempered his praise of Erasmus. Erasmus, he wrote, was 'a greater Scholar then Divine'. See Fuller, *Church-History of Britain*, p. 182.

<sup>50</sup> See Bailey, *The Life of Thomas Fuller*, p. 449.

his dedication to truth. Erasmus, however, provided some comfort. Regarding the hostility to his writings, Fuller wrote that 'I [...] comforted my self with the *counsel of Erasmus; Si non possis placere Omnibus, placeto Optimis*; If thou canst not please all, please the best.'<sup>51</sup> In the 1642 text, Fuller defended his Erasmian stance by arguing:

Moderation is not an halting betwixt two opinions, when the through-believing of one of them is necessary to salvation [...]. Nor is it lukewarmnesse in those things wherein Gods glory is concernd [...]. But it is a mixture of discretion and charity in ones judgement.<sup>52</sup>

He then concluded by differentiating moderation from Laodicean lukewarmness:

The lukewarm man eyes onely his own ends, and particular profit; the moderate man aims at the good of others, and unity of the church. *Yet such moderate men are commonly crush'd betwixt the extreme parties on both sides.*<sup>53</sup>

After the Restoration, Roger L'Estrange, another self-defined Erasmian, remembered Fuller's words and applied them to Erasmus directly when he wrote that Erasmus was 'crush'd betwixt the Two Extremes'.<sup>54</sup> Not only did Fuller suggest that moderation was necessary to salvation, he also attempted to disassociate moderation from any accusation of lukewarmness. Moderate individuals might end up in an uncomfortable position between extremists on either side, but they were not there because they could not make up their minds about truth. Rather, they believed that charity, peace, and moderation were Christian truths that had to be defended against the attacks of the zealous. For Fuller, true Christian moderation meant that most doctrines should be considered *adiaphora*. The Nicene Creed was the fundamental core. The Creed according to Fuller, was 'the shot and totall summe of Faith'.<sup>55</sup> Erasmus would not have disagreed.

<sup>51</sup> Fuller, *The Appeal of Iniured Innocence*, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Fuller, *The Holy State*, p. 205.

<sup>53</sup> Fuller, *The Holy State*, p. 206. Pride, said Fuller, was the root cause of immoderation: 'This makes men stickle for their opinions, to make them fundamentall: Proud men having deeply studied some additionall point in Divinity, will strive to make the same necessary to salvation, to enhance the value of their own worth and pains; and it must be fundamentall in religion, because it is fundamentall to their reputation' (p. 208).

<sup>54</sup> L'Estrange, *Select Colloquies Out of Erasmus Roterodamus*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> Fuller, *The Holy State*, p. 208.

In 1651 Thomas Fuller helped write and produce the book *Abel Redivivus*.<sup>56</sup> While the Erasmus entry in *Abel Redivivus* was written by Bishop Bedell of Kilmore, Fuller oversaw the project.<sup>57</sup> This text, published in two volumes, contained short biographies of one hundred and seven leading Reformation and post-Reformation figures including Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Ridley, Cranmer, Melancthon, Calvin, Jewel, Knox, Ramus, Parker, Fox, Perkins, Andrewes, Sandys, Whitgift, etc. Interestingly, Erasmus was included among Protestant theologians and church leaders. What is even more interesting is the prominent position given to Erasmus. Out of all the biographies, Erasmus's was the longest. In the 1651 edition Erasmus had twenty-eight pages, while Luther had twenty-six pages. Next in importance came Calvin and Lancelot Andrewes, each with twenty pages. Perkins, by comparison, only had ten pages and other Calvinists such as Beza, Knox, and Foxe had fewer than eight pages each. It is also worth noting that Erasmus's life was portrayed in a fairly objective manner. Nearly all his works were discussed, including *De Libero Arbitrio*. *Abel Redivivus* is not only indicative of both Bedell's and Fuller's positive views of Erasmus, but also makes it clear that Erasmus's writings were available in seventeenth-century England and that Erasmus continued to occupy a preeminent position for some mid-seventeenth-century writers.<sup>58</sup>

The rhetorical style and use of Erasmus that is evident in both Joseph Hall and Thomas Fuller is also found, to varying degrees, among a wide variety of moderate Calvinists and Arminians. Even though each author had a specific idea of what 'moderation' meant and where the *via media* was properly located, conformists generally agreed that peace, unity, and order were supreme truths of the Christian religion. This rhetorical depiction of the *via media* was ultimately rejected by an increasing number of English puritans. The condemnation of moderation by the godly was not only directed at Arminians, of either the Laudian, Great Tew, or Little Gidding persuasions, but also at moderate Calvinists.<sup>59</sup> From the other

<sup>56</sup> Fuller and others, *Abel redevivus, or, the Dead Yet Speaking*.

<sup>57</sup> Bailey, *The Life of Thomas Fuller*, pp. 493–94. Thomas Fuller wrote the introduction and contributed seven biographical sketches.

<sup>58</sup> See Duke, *The Fulnesse and Freenesse of Gods Grace*.

<sup>59</sup> Little Gidding was something of a separatist Arminian community, which sought to create a refuge for meditation, study, and liturgical worship. In the minds of puritans it looked a lot like a Catholic religious community. Charles visited the community, accepted gifts from them, and asserted that they were an orthodox community. This was then used to attack Arminians and Charles I in *The Arminian Nunnery*. See Reid Barbour's fascinating analysis of three 'Arminian' communities: the royal court, Great Tew, and Little Gidding. Barbour,



side, moderation was also condemned by certain Laudian polemicists.<sup>60</sup> Peter Heylyn, who was uncompromising in his attacks on Calvinism, directly charged that Fuller ‘complied with the times.’<sup>61</sup> Earlier in the century Andrew Willet had specifically linked Erasmus with ‘time serving’. Referring to Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* and *Annotations* on Romans 12. 11, Willet wrote:

*Erasmus* also giueth this sense, that we must beare patiently, *si quid pro tempore acciderit, incommodi*, if any thing fall out for the time incommodiously [...]. But *Beza* giueth this reason, why this reading can not be receiued at all; because no such phrase is found in the Scripture, to serue the time in any such sense: temporisers, and time-seruers rather are reprooued in Scripture, then commanded.<sup>62</sup>

As we will see below, puritans denounced those who used the rhetoric of peace and concord as being timeservers who supported conformity out of a desire for power and position. Those who praised moderation were uncommitted to Christian truth. This condemnation was a natural reaction to the rhetoric of moderation found in moderate Calvinists such as Hall and Fuller, for whom moderation was itself a Christian truth. If moderation was essential, then it was not truly in a middle place, but a truth that opposed the errors of all the immoderate of whatever persuasion. Those denounced as ‘immoderate’ responded by deprecating the Laodiceans. The language of unity thus contributed to increasing disunity. England did not descend into civil war simply because of disputes over predestination, though they certainly facilitated the escalation of religious tensions. There is plenty of evidence that what really upset English Calvinists was not free will theology per se, but Charles I’s repudiation of Calvinist orthodoxy, ceremonial ‘innovation’, and Laud’s heavy handed authoritarianism. The issue of order, both ecclesiastical and political, was central to the conflict. There was a deeper issue as well, for which the issue of predestination was indeed the spark. Zealous puritans would ultimately repudiate what could be called an Erasmian rhetorical paradigm, in which peace was presented as Christian truth. For the godly, truth was not peace, love, and unity; truth was doctrinal. Naturally, the most important truths were those dealing with the process of salvation. It is

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<sup>60</sup> The concept of ‘Laudianism’, as Anthony Milton has demonstrated, was shaped by Laudian polemicists, especially Heylyn, and ‘had an unstable quality’. See Milton, ‘The Creation of Laudianism’, p. 180.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Bailey, *The Life of Thomas Fuller*, p. 449.

<sup>62</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, p. 552.

therefore possible to view a growing chasm between self-styled moderates such as the Calvinists Hall and Fuller and numerous puritan authors. To illustrate the repudiation of moderation by the godly, I will briefly look at two texts. The first is the semi-anonymous *The Popes Nuntioes*, by D. T.; the second comes from a manuscript most likely penned by William Prynne, the harsh critic of Arminianism, Charles I, the episcopacy, and, of course, the English theatre.

*The Popes Nuntioes*, published in 1643, a year after Fuller's *Holy State*, attempted to rip apart the relationship between theological truth and the theological rhetoric of peace and unity. In doing so this pamphlet helps explain how zealous Calvinists, especially presbyterians, perceived an Erasmian worldview and sought to justify violence directed against the king and the established church. D. T. declared that the rhetoric of 'peace and charity' was a 'curtain' that obscured the diabolical agenda of Arminians in the English Church.<sup>63</sup> 'Moderation' was indeed located in a *via media*, but it was a middle place between truth and error. 'Arminian' was thus the name given to those who could not make up their minds between truth and error. The text that followed the introduction by D. T. was ostensibly a report by the Venetian ambassador on the nature of religious controversies in England. In all likelihood the text was an English creation. Both the nature of the discussion and the syntax and style suggest that it was a puritan text using the literary device of an outsider's view of English culture. Even Prynne, who possibly knew who crafted the work, mentioned it in his attack on Laud, but also noted: 'If we beleeeve the *Pamphlet* intituled; *The Popes Nuncio*.'<sup>64</sup> In some ways the authenticity of the text makes little difference. D. T. wanted to paint a picture for English readers of the current nature of English religion and the alliance between Laud and Catholicism.<sup>65</sup> The goal, of course, was to sway public opinion against Laud and this could be best accomplished by creating the perception for readers that the source was unbiased or, better yet, anti-puritan.<sup>66</sup> The Arminian method, according to D. T., was to use the language of love and peace to maintain

<sup>63</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. A2'.

<sup>64</sup> Prynne, *Canterburies Doome*, p. 352.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Questier, in an insightful commentary about the relationship between Laud and Catholicism, argues that acceptance or rejection of contemporary claims that Laud was a crypto-Catholic obscures the 'complex and politically sophisticated danger between the regime and Laudian clerics on the one hand and, on the other, a series of Catholic interest groups [...] which were trying to capitalize on what they perceived, with reason, as a series of radical innovations in the English Church'. See Questier, 'Arminianism, Catholicism, and Puritanism', especially pp. 76–77.

<sup>66</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. A2'.



unity and conformity in order to bolster their own power. Those who upheld the episcopal establishment with appeals to moderation and peace did not care about religious truth, but only power.<sup>67</sup> Reminiscent of Machiavelli's comments about religion, which were later echoed by Karl Marx, the text stated that princes and politicians publicly revered religion 'for the commoditie which they receive from it; as well knowing by experience of all ages, that there is nothing more proper to preserve men in concord, and render the people obedient to the higher Powers.'<sup>68</sup> Catholics, Arminians and conformists were power loving hypocrites. The pursuit of 'concord' was thus juxtaposed with the pursuit of truth. Those who sought true religion were willing to accept conflict as a potential byproduct. Conversely, both the Catholic Church and the English Church sought obedience, concord, and unity as the highest goals of religion and to achieve these ends employed the theological rhetoric of peace and love. The author of the *Popes Nuntioes*, however, refused to accept that peace and charity were in fact doctrinal truths and condemned such language as evil manipulations designed to obscure truth for the sake of secular power. The point, for D. T., was that Laud, Arminians, and, by extension, all supporters of 'moderation' had severed the tie between peace and truth. The text depicted a Europe divided into areas of peace and conflict. The author looked around Europe and determined that divisions of religion and open conflict were the natural result when truth spoke. In Germany and France, where Protestantism took root, religious conflict ensued and 'consequently Arms have been taken up by one against the other.'<sup>69</sup> Alternatively, those realms that 'prevented divisions of Religion' and 'maintained themselves in peace and tranquillitie', such as Spain and Italy, were Catholic nations where truth was ignored for the sake of peaceful order.<sup>70</sup> According to words given to Panzini, peace was actually a mark of Catholicism. D. T.'s Protestant readers, of course, would have read a reversed image: coercive order, not truth, reigned in Catholic lands and the conflict in Protestant lands came from the devil's attacks on the truth. Now, however, the rhetoric of peace was being used to subvert the practice of Christian truth in England.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> David Como has shown how moderate Calvinists who sought to engage and find common ground with 'Arminians' were attacked by zealous predestinarians. See Como, 'Puritans, Predestination and the Construction of Orthodoxy'.

<sup>68</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> Luther made the same argument against Erasmus in *De Servo Arbitrio* where he wrote,

In this pamphlet the state of religion in England was dissected into three competing groups. There were the puritans, who followed the doctrine of Calvin and believed the English Reformation 'but imperfect'. The puritans, who were 'the most potent', made up the largest number of English men and women, including 'some Bishops, all the Gentry and Communitie'.<sup>72</sup> The notion that 'all the Gentry' were puritans also provides further evidence of the author's religious perspective. In the middle were the 'Protestants', who were 'composed of the King, almost all the Bishops, and Nobility, and besides both the Universities'.<sup>73</sup> Catholics made up another portion of English society, but represented only a small percentage. The minority Protestants and Catholics 'very easily combine together for the ruine and rooting out of Puritanes'.<sup>74</sup> They used the rhetoric of peace and order to 'suppresse, and quell the Puritans'.<sup>75</sup> The language of *pax et concordia*, controlled by a minority, marginalized the majority. When this puritan mainstream realised that the rhetoric of peace was being used to demand the conformity and subjection of that mainstream they were ultimately willing to resort to violence. The publication of the *Popes Nuntioes* was a call for puritans to see that peace was a false value that was used to justify the suppression of truth. And, rather than fearing disunity, they should accept it as the natural result of the pursuit of true doctrine in England.

Neither Erasmus nor English authors with a similar worldview intended for the rhetoric of peace and unity to obscure true Christianity. Rather, they believed that peace and concord were fundamental truths of Christianity. Characterizing their approach as 'peaceful' and 'moderate', their rhetoric placed nonconformists in the very uncomfortable position of challenging unity for the sake of doctrinal truth. Some puritans, such as D. T., understood this and turned the rhetoric around. Peace and unity were not good things. Rather, they were veils that obscured the ultimate truth, which was that the propagation of Protestant truth naturally created opposition.<sup>76</sup>

regarding Erasmus's attempts to push for peace, 'Here, as you yourself admit, you are indeed sailing against the stream; why, you are trying to quench fire with straw! Stop your complaining, stop your doctoring; the origin and continuance of this conflict is from God; and it will not cease till all who oppose the word have become as the mire of the streets'. See Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. by Packer and Johnson, p. 92.

<sup>72</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. B2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. B3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> D. T., *The Popes Nuntioes*, sig. B3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> Nathan Johnstone has shown how Protestant diabolism reinforced the belief that the

Two diametrically opposed theological methodologies had developed by the 1640s. There is a connection between the theological methodology Erasmus developed in the sixteenth century and the violence that erupted during the mid-seventeenth century. Erasmus created a theological hierarchy with peace and unity at the top. Below this level he encouraged the church to liberally designate doctrines and practices as 'indifferent'. Within the church he encouraged tolerance of divergent doctrines and some practices. He believed, however, that the church had the authority to define the essential core doctrines of Christianity and to designate which doctrines, practices, and ceremonies were indifferent. The English Church, from Elizabeth's reign to that of Charles I, saw the advantage of this theological approach and employed its rhetoric to support religious conformity. By the end of Charles' reign, however, many puritans came to believe that this methodology employed a purposely false rhetoric of toleration.

Just as the *Popes Nuntioes* pulled the 'curtains' away from the rhetoric of 'peace and charity', another puritan text, published a few years earlier in 1640, sought to expose the evil machinations behind the manipulative language of moderation and tolerance. Published texts certainly had a wider readership than manuscripts, but a handwritten tract by a leading puritan may give an even more important glimpse inside the puritan animosity to the idea of tolerance. The Bodleian Library holds a remarkable manuscript that helps explain why English puritans felt so threatened by English Arminianism. The religious tract, written by William Prynne or one of his close associates, made a concerted attack on Arminian tolerance.<sup>77</sup> Prynne played a central role in Parliament's condemnation and execution of Laud and certainly contributed to the nature of the public sphere during the 1640s.<sup>78</sup> The fifth chapter specifically accused Arminians of tolerating heresy by

devil fought hardest against God's truest followers: Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism*, pp. 60–141.

<sup>77</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson, D.831. The tract, entitled 'A proposal of some considerations concerninge the oath', begins on page 103 of this volume and then continues with its own page numbering. A note on the first page reads: 'This is a piece of virulent Puritanism; probably written by Wm Pryn or some of his associates against Br Laud and the Bishops on acct. of the Canons made and published in 1640'.

<sup>78</sup> It was Peter Heylyn who brought to Charles's attention a passage in Prynne's *Historiomaticx* that depicted women actresses as whores. Charles took this as a personal attack on his queen, Henrietta Maria, who acted in court masques. Prynne eventually had his ears cropped, but got his revenge at Laud's trial. One of Prynne's points in that trial was that Laud had not allowed him to be properly treated after his ears were mutilated. Laud said he recalled no such request. Laud, *The History of the Troubles and Trial of[...] William Laud*, p. 349.

arguing for toleration on the five articles of predestination.<sup>79</sup> Such toleration, in the name of peace and moderation, would:

bring in all manner of heresies whatsoever [...]. Therefore it is manifest how just cause the reformed churches had and have now, to refuse this mutuall toleration for this toleration is a plane admission and introduction of all manner of [evil] into the church of god.<sup>80</sup>

Some puritans felt quite strongly that the ‘toleration’ espoused at Great Tew, Lambeth Palace, or by Calvinist moderates, such as Joseph Hall and Thomas Fuller, could mean the end of Calvinist England. According to this tract the greatest evil of so-called ‘moderates’ was not their doctrines, but rather their non-dogmatic emphasis on moderation, peace, and acceptance of a spectrum of belief on key elements of the Christian faith. The bottom line for puritans such as Prynne was that ‘toleration of Heresies is a ruin for all.’<sup>81</sup> This was a direct echo of Luther, who had written that ‘absolute tolerance is total persecution.’<sup>82</sup>

Puritans recognized that many Arminians, and conformists with them, used an Erasmian-style rhetoric of peace and tolerance to marginalize those willing to disrupt unity over doctrinal and liturgical issues. This tract cleverly reversed such rhetoric by demonstrating that ‘tolerance’ was, in fact, a clever delusion: ‘Now the Arminians know full well, that there are some Christian sorts and Churches, which while the world stands, will never accept of that condition.’<sup>83</sup> In return, the ‘moderates’ did not tolerate those who were intolerant, namely ‘the Reformed, Lutheran, and Romish sorts.’<sup>84</sup> He then mocked these English moderates, for if

<sup>79</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Rawl., D.831, p. 66.

<sup>80</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Rawl., D.831, p. 66. In a 1629 letter that was not published until 1651, Christopher Potter also discussed the Arminian argument for ‘mutual toleration’. Potter, however, took it at face value as a positive indication of Arminian willingness to live quietly within the Church of England. ‘Out of mere tendernes of conscience, and zeale to piety and Gods Glory, they [Arminians] desired a moderation in some rigorous opinions; But however a mutuall toleration of one anothers Errors and infirmities, still keeping the ligament of the Christian communion and fraternity inviolable’. See Potter, *His own Vindication of Himself*.

<sup>81</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Rawl., D.831, p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Nulla persecutio tota persecutio’. *WA*, 3.424, pp. 11–14.

<sup>83</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Rawl., D.831, p. 74.

<sup>84</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Rawl., D.831, p. 74. This tract presented a new puritan interpretation of Arminianism. Francis Rous in 1626 argued that Arminianism was a step towards Popery: ‘Whosoever will bring in Popery, into a country strongly fixed in the Protestant Doctrine, must not presently fly in the face of the whole Protestant Doctrine, but his only way, is to work into it by degrees of plausible arminianisme, even to put in these little thieves into the window of the

they did not tolerate committed Calvinists, Lutherans, and Catholics, then they only tolerated themselves. Their rhetoric of tolerance was exposed as a joke. It is also again clear from such a treatise that Arminians and moderate Calvinists were lumped together, not because of their theology, but because of their world-view and religious rhetoric. The tract then added another layer. The Arminians themselves knew that their rhetoric of tolerance, peace, charity and moderation was a fraud designed to destroy the doctrinal basis of English Protestantism. Tolerance was really a blatant attack on the reformed Church of England.<sup>85</sup> This tract argued on one level that the tolerance Arminians argued for was intolerable to English puritans. A secondary argument was that it was not even real tolerance in the first place. The tolerance of the Arminians was in actuality a fraud. The author of the tract believed that there was no real possibility for religious tolerance during this era.<sup>86</sup> Rather, there was a battle between two competing visions of the Christian Church. Erasmus's theological methodology, which was adopted by the Arminians, did not represent a *via media* between Catholicism and Protestantism, but rather a strong position on one side of a divide over the importance of doctrine to the Christian community.<sup>87</sup> This manuscript, combined with the *Popes Nuntioes*, demonstrates that the rhetoric of peace and moderation could no longer effectively conceal the aggressive denunciation it carried against puritans and those with similar religious sentiments. Of course, by 1643 no one

Church, and then they may unlocke the doors of the a Church, and let in all Popery'. See Rous, *Testis Veritatis*, p. 105. In the 1641 manuscript by Prynne or a close associate, Arminianism was no longer depicted as a step towards Popery. It was actually worse than Popery because it denied absolute truth and introduced doctrinal tolerance. Puritans came to realize that the danger to Reformed Protestantism from Erasmianism was not doctrinal heresy, but doctrinal indifference.

<sup>85</sup> Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Rawl., D.831, p. 75.

<sup>86</sup> Gary Remer points out that Chillingworth tried to balance religious toleration with political obedience, but eventually chose to support obedience rather than toleration. Remer suggests that this was a break with the Erasmian tradition of tolerance. See Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric of Toleration*, pp. 166–67. This and previous chapters, however, have demonstrated that for Erasmus and his humanist descendants in England, tolerance was always subordinate to peace, order, and obedience. Chillingworth simply lived within an historical context where the rhetoric of toleration had ceased to be believable or helpful in the cause of peace and order.

<sup>87</sup> See Fuller, *The Holy State*, pp. 205–08. Some texts from this era attempted to reposition the *via media* from a middle space between Geneva and Rome to a middle space between Calvin and Arminius. There is no indication that such attempts had much influence, but it does point out that the English religious *via media* was constantly contested, both in terms of whether it was good or bad and regarding where it actually was. See Duke, *The Fulnesse and Freenesse of Gods Grace*.

could pretend anyway that 'peace' and 'unity' could smooth over the rough areas of English religion. A line was drawn between zealous proponents of doctrinal truth and zealous defenders of peaceful 'tolerance', meaning conformity.

I noted at the beginning of this paper that it is not difficult to find an Erasmian theological legacy prior to and through the rise of English Arminianism. Yet, Erasmus also could be quite popular with moderate Calvinists such as Hall and Fuller. What all of these admirers of Erasmus shared was a common language. Despite the polemical and rhetorical construction and reconstruction of where the moderate middle should be located, the language used by Calvinists such as Hall and Fuller was based on a set of theological assumptions that were shared by various anti-Calvinists. Where Hall and Fuller used an Erasmian style to support what they perceived as status-quo episcopal Calvinism, writers such as Richard Montague, Lancelot Andrewes, Falkland, Chillingworth, and even Laud employed similar rhetorical forms to portray various non-Calvinist visions of Protestantism as the way to achieve peace and concord. Peace, moderation, charity, and conformity for the sake of unity were not simply nice sounding words, but high theological truths. The debates among conformists were over how best to achieve a culture of peace, love, and unity. The rhetorical tradition of the *via media* existed primarily as a mindset and polemical vocabulary and not as an actual moderate middle. It was the underlying assumptions of this rhetorical style that ultimately would be rejected by puritans, along with some Laudians, such as Peter Heylyn, prior to and during the Civil War. Thus, the fractures within early Stuart religious culture were more fundamental than a schism over predestination. A division had developed between two competing rhetorical paradigms; between two general modes of religious thought.

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Section V.  
Erasmus and Literary Tradition



# ‘NOTHING IF NOT CRITICAL’: G. E. B. SAINTSBURY, ERASMUS, AND THE HISTORY OF (ENGLISH) LITERATURE

Mark Vessey

## *Literature and History: The English Connection*

‘The arrangement which Erasmus rejected whilst his letters could be regarded mainly as literature’, wrote Allen in the preface to the *Opus epistolarum Erasmi*, ‘has become necessary now that they are regarded as one of the best sources for the history of his age’.<sup>1</sup> The hand of Bishop Stubbs is already heavy on that page.<sup>2</sup> As an earnest of documentary intent, the editor subjoined a calendar of the letters with dates and places assigned. ‘1484–94: Gouda, Steyn, Brussels <?>. 1495–98: Paris. 1499: Tournehem, Antwerp, Paris’.<sup>3</sup> Then, in the summer of 1499, England [...].

More than any of its sequels, the inaugural volume of Allen’s ‘Erasmus’ settles on England. It records the writer’s successive visits there; his sojourns in Oxford,

<sup>1</sup> Allen I, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> William Stubbs, Regius Professor of History at Oxford (1866–84), Bishop of Oxford (1888–1901), specialist in the constitutional history of the English Middle Ages, and path-breaking editor of English historical documents according to the new Continental (viz. German) standards, was a supporter of Allen’s edition of Erasmus from the earliest days, as noted by Garrod, ‘Percy Stafford Allen’, pp. 384, 390. There is a good account of Stubbs’s historiographical achievement in Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*, pp. 126–51. On the ‘documentary’ bias of Allen’s edition, see Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, p. 14 and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Allen I, pp. xii–xiv.

London, and Cambridge; his relations with Colet, More, Mountjoy, and others. The last item, from the summer of 1514 (Ep. 297), is a dedication to Wolsey of a book that Erasmus hoped would reach the King. For all that he or anyone else knew at that time, he might still have made England his home. Instead of being dated from Basel, Louvain or Freiburg, the majority of his later letters, along with the prefaces to his various works, would then have been written in that country. *Dis aliter visum*. Yet even before Allen reduced them to order, the calendar of Erasmus's residence in England and the register of his English acquaintance were sufficient to secure him a place of honour not only in the annals of English ecclesiastical history but also in what has passed for the history of English literature.

Even in an age when Erasmus's letters could no longer be regarded mainly as 'literature', they could still serve as a source for the 'literary' history of his age. For assurance of that, we have only to turn to the first chapter of the third volume of the original *Cambridge History of English Literature*, devoted to 'Renaissance and Reformation', published two years after Allen's first volume. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, according to T. M. Lindsay, Europe had become a 'cosmopolitan republic' of humanist letters, with Erasmus its undisputed sovereign — Erasmus who 'belongs as much to the history of the classical renaissance in our land [*sic*] as does Linacre, Colet, or More'. The first recto-headline of the chapter is 'Erasmus' First Visit to England'. Linacre, Colet, More, and others are headlined in their turn. At length, Sir Thomas Elyot's *Dictionary* and Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* carry the Erasmian 'renaissance' safely into the English vernacular and the generation of Shakespeare. So it was that 'classical learning [...] gradually permeated England so thoroughly that, though Shakespeare was not far distant from Chaucer by the measurement of time, when we pass from one to the other it is as if we entered a new and entirely different world'.<sup>4</sup>

While a narrative of Erasmus's transformative role in English literary history could no doubt be plausibly extrapolated from texts of the Elizabethan promulgators of humanist rhetorical models in English milieux,<sup>5</sup> it was nineteenth-cen-

<sup>4</sup> Lindsay, 'Englishmen and the Classical Renaissance', pp. 1–2, 24

<sup>5</sup> A selection of testimonies s.v. 'Erasmus' in the index to Smith, ed., *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, to be taken with the cautions of Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, pp. 122–60; see also Vickers, ed., *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, pp. 31–38 and *passim*. Smith's collection is itself testimony to an early stage in the institutionalization of 'English literature' as an academic enterprise; his preface ends with an acknowledgment of help received from G. E. B. Saintsbury, both as a friend and as the author of a recently published *History of Criticism*. Smith was already a Lecturer in English at Edinburgh when Saintsbury took the chair there in 1895.

tury historical scholarship that boosted him to the front of the post-medieval section of the *Cambridge History of English Literature*.<sup>6</sup> There had been no tradition, since the early seventeenth century, of presenting the author of the *Colloquies* and *Praise of Folly* as a key figure in the literary history of the English nation. (Not even Pope, in the notorious tribute of *An Essay on Criticism*, had gone that far.) Nor would Erasmus's restored position as prime mover of a literary renaissance in England remain unassailed for long. Writing on *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* for the *Oxford History of English Literature* in 1954, C. S. Lewis was ready to deny *any* close relationship 'between the *renascentia* and the late sixteenth-century efflorescence of English literature'.<sup>7</sup> Without feeling obliged to mount a detailed case against it, Lewis dismissed the providentially Erasmian history of English 'letters' laid down half a century earlier in the *CHEL*.

The ease with which he did so, we can now see, owed much to his practical sense of the limits assigned in his time to an English *literary* history. Lewis's volume for the *OHEL* ranged broadly across learned disciplines and popular genres but took its bearings from the works of such acknowledged virtuosi as Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Hooker. Lewis, in other words, had a *canon* of English literature — one which, while making generous allowance for other kinds of belles-lettres, was dominated by the reputedly higher genres of poetry and fictional prose. When he pronounces that 'all the facts seem consistent with the view that the great [English] literature of the fifteen-eighties and nineties was something which humanism, with its unities and *Gorboducs* and English hexameters, would have prevented if it could',<sup>8</sup> we should still be impressed by how little humanism is called upon to answer for in this literary history and by how much more select must have been the literature therein chronicled than the generality of *bonae litterae* as Erasmus and others reputed them. Lewis takes it for granted not only that his readers will recognize good, great, or 'golden' literature when they encounter it, but also that the primary subject-matter of the literary historian is 'literature' as such.

Those assumptions mark him as a scholar of the early to mid-twentieth century, writing in a time when the term 'literature' was already widely understood in the 'restricted sense' noted by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as late as 1903 as being 'of very recent emergence' but before the question famously posed by

<sup>6</sup> Most obviously Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers*; Mansfield, *Interpretations of Erasmus*, pp. 338–41.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 19.

Jean-Paul Sartre in 1947 ('What *is* literature?') announced the revolution that we now associate with 'literary theory'.<sup>9</sup> The editors of the *CHEL*, speaking for an earlier generation than Lewis's, had been slightly more circumspect. Since, as they acknowledged, 'the history of a nation's literature cannot be divorced from some consideration of its political, religious, and social life, including its manners as well as its phases of sentiment and fashion, its trivial thoughts no less than its serious moments', they had thought it useful 'to make some provision for treating certain subjects more or less closely allied to literature pure or proper [*sic*]:

Such [subjects] are the literature [*sic*] of science and philosophy; and that of politics and economics; parliamentary eloquence; the work of schools and universities and libraries; scholarship; the pamphlet literature of religious and political controversy; the newspaper and the magazine; the labours of the press and the services of booksellers; homely books dealing with precept and manners and social life; domestic letters and street songs; accounts of travel and records of sport — the whole range of letters, in its widest acceptance, from the 'Cambridge Platonists' to the 'fraternity of vagabonds'.<sup>10</sup>

From one angle, this supplementary agenda now seems well ahead of its time, embracing as it does almost all that has since fallen under the so-called 'history of the book'.<sup>11</sup> From another, the brief for those volumes can be seen to recall and extend a much older definition of 'literary history' or *historia literaria* as a discipline encompassing all learned or 'written' disciplines — that is, all 'letters' in the ancient, Latinate sense still taken for granted in the nineteenth century and fundamental to such latterday coinages as Thomas Carlyle's formula of the 'hero as man of letters'.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For a well documented but concise rendering of the modern history of a key term, see Widdowson, *Literature*.

<sup>10</sup> Ward and Waller, eds, *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, I (1907), p. v.

<sup>11</sup> The convergence is hardly accidental. For all it that owes to *l'histoire du livre*, contemporary Anglophone 'book history' draws heavily on a tradition of historical bibliography whose modern institutional foundations were laid in the same period and milieux as those in which the *Cambridge History of English Literature* was projected: McKenzie, 'What's Past is Prologue'; Barker, 'Reflections on the History of the Book'; Howsam, *Old Books and New Histories*. For an expansion of this point, see Bill Bell, 'English Studies and the Trouble with History', a fine essay that I only chanced upon after completing my own.

<sup>12</sup> In Lecture 5 of Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, a type there exemplified by Johnson, Rousseau, and Burns and already associated by Carlyle with the technology and culture of print. Note, however, that Carlyle also shares the Romantic tendency to identify 'literature' with poetry and a few other select genres. The main trajectory of the



When Allen speaks of Erasmus's *epistolae* as having been treated in the past 'mainly as literature', he too must be suspected of equivocation. We have seen that he assumed that Erasmus himself already regarded them as such — a point easily granted as long as we understand 'literature' in the expansive, classical, and *early* modern sense of *litterae* but that stands open to the charge of anachronism as soon as we allow the English word to take on its more generically restricted, *late* modern sense. And yet that *late* modern sense is seemingly the one required by the opposition that Allen wished to create between the longstanding appeal of the *Opus epistolarum Erasmi* as 'literature' and the supervening demand of history. Lucky for Allen, we may think, that he was writing his preface in English! Only with the greatest difficulty could the intended antithesis — as it were between Literature and History — be conveyed in a Latin that Erasmus, for one, would not have thought barbarous. As it is, Allen's statement in Appendix VII of the first volume of his edition, that '[l]etters [*epistolae*] were to [Erasmus] elegant literature, not material for history' rests on a dubious distinction.<sup>13</sup> 'Letters' as Erasmus knew and promoted them, (*bonae*) *litterae*, were the shared domain of all the Muses, including Clio. The invention of an autonomous Muse of 'Literature', taken for a world of discourse unto itself, belonged to a later age than his, like the science of History locally embodied for Allen by Bishop Stubbs.

Admittedly, such distinctions are themselves now all but ancient history. Few readers of Allen's preface in our own day are likely to be stopped in their tracks

*historia literaria* (or *litterarum*) in the comprehensive sense of a 'history of learning' originates with Bacon, *On the Advancement of Learning*, Book 2.

<sup>13</sup> Allen I, p. 596. The statement is evidently meant to summarize the position taken by Erasmus in the preface to the 1529 *Opus epistolarum*. There Erasmus says that he would neither follow the suggestions of friends who urged a chronological ordering of the letters (which would in any case have taken a lot of trouble) nor arrange them according to the various subjects treated, since diversity of subject-matter was the chief pleasure that readers looked for 'in this kind of writing' (*in hoc scripti genere*). Clearly, Erasmus's rationale was an artistic or, as we might now say, 'literary-rhetorical' one. Equally clearly, he had nothing invested in any conceivable distinction between these or other writings of his considered *as works of rhetorical art* and their potential value *as testimony to his historical situation*. It is now widely recognized that one of Erasmus's principal achievements as editor of other writers' epistolary corpora was to have insisted upon their specific historico-cultural locations, even as he emphasized the rhetorical properties of their texts. On these aspects of his edition of Jerome, see Clausi, *Ridar voce all'antico Padre*, especially pp. 186–95. Although Erasmus respected the traditional non-chronological ordering of Jerome's letters in his 1516 edition, he was nonetheless ready to exploit their documentary value for the *Life* of the saint that he prefixed to it. It was Allen, attempting to emulate the 'diplomatic' editorial methods of medieval historians like Stubbs, who first forced the division between Literature and History.

by his hints of a rivalry between the shadowy powers of late-nineteenth-century Literature and History. By and large, 'literary' and 'historical' styles of scholarly attention to 'texts' or 'documents' nowadays cross and coexist without formality, let alone contestation. While prophecies of the end of History and the end of Literature have proved equally premature, the 'literary' claims of history and history's claims on 'literature' have both been pressed hard enough in recent years to falsify any and all hard oppositions of those putatively transgeneric disciplinary kinds. Every library, it seems, is now an archive and vice versa; literary and/or historical scholars, we are all folded in one party. Nowhere is this interdisciplinary compact more likely to be observed than under the rubric of 'Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters', a formula of unimpeachable Latinity well designed to take us back to a time before the invention of what has been vulgarly known as 'literature' and, in the same breath, safely beyond the literary-theoretical anxieties of the later twentieth century.

As you may have guessed by now, I do not intend to respect those generous terms of accommodation. Instead, I want to use the occasion of this centenary to return us briefly to that other time, Allen's time, when something could still — that is, could *already* — appear to be at issue between history and literature, in order then to raise again (after Lisa Jardine, among others) the question of Erasmus's place, role, or (dis)appointed destiny in the long-running story of Latin and post-Latin 'letters'. Since Allen chose to take Erasmus for history, I shall need a double for him to speak on behalf of literature. He will be another local man, a graduate and honorary fellow of Merton, whose portrait hangs in the Senior Common Room of the college next door to Allen's and who in death, if not (so far as I know) in life, rubbed shoulders with the ungregarious President of Corpus.

### *King Saintsbury and the Fortunes of 'Lit. Ang.'*

In the volume of British Academy *Proceedings* containing H. W. Garrod's tribute to P. S. Allen as a man 'who made credible the lives of the saints' we find another memorial, more in the spirit of Folly. According to his obituarist, G. E. B. Saintsbury could have professed himself in terms given to the personified Grammar by Martianus Capella: 'Partes autem meae sunt quatuor: litterae litteratura litteratus litterate'.<sup>14</sup> (There is the barbarism that Allen so nar-

<sup>14</sup> Elton, 'George Edward Bateman Saintsbury', p. 344, quoting Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, 3. 231. Apparently Saintsbury had earlier applied this motto to F. J. Furnivall, the great freelancer of English studies and founder of literary societies. See

rowly avoided: Latin *litteratura* taken for 'literature' in a sense that neither Martianus nor Erasmus could readily have grasped.)<sup>15</sup> Saintsbury was a generation older than Allen. Like him he had taken a second class in 'Greats', as the Final Honours School in classics, philosophy, and ancient history — otherwise *Litterae Humaniores*, or Lit. Hum. for short — was (and still is) called at Oxford. Again like Allen he had taught for a while in some out-of-the-way places, then set up as an independent 'man of letters'. There the parallel ends. Whereas Allen would sit down at his dining-table in Longwall Street to edit Erasmus's letters for the Clarendon Press, Saintsbury made a name for himself as a book reviewer for fashionable London magazines and, in a spate of studies designed for a general, educated readership, 'as a critic and historian of English literature' (thus his memorialist). In 1895, aged nearly fifty, he was appointed to the chair of Rhetoric and English Literature (formerly Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres) at Edinburgh University, in succession to David Masson. His publications over the next two decades included a *Short History of English Literature* (1898) that would remain in print for half a century, a three-volume *History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1900–04), a similarly proportioned *History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day* (1908–10), a *History of English Prose Rhythm* (1912), and no fewer than twenty-one chapters for the *Cambridge History of English Literature*. No-one would have called Saintsbury a saint. 'King' Saintsbury was the title half-mockingly bestowed on him, soon after his death, in Stephen Potter's *The Muse in Chains*, the classic tongue-in-cheek account of the rise and presumed imminent (!) demise of university English studies.<sup>16</sup> There Saintsbury appears as one of the great colonizers of this new field, dubbed 'Lit. Ang.' by Potter after the examinations *In Literis Anglicis* belatedly instituted in Oxford, basation of Lit. Hum., in 1897. That was the year in which Allen departed for the

Benzie, *Dr F. J. Furnivall, Victorian Scholar Adventurer*; Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, pp. 184–86. Garrod's notice on Allen (Garrod, 'Percy Stafford Allen') ended with the remark about the 'lives of the saints'.

<sup>15</sup> In a work that we shall have cause to cite more fully below, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, Saintsbury made Martianus the last in a line of ancient critics that began with Aristotle; the next figure of note after him would be Dante. Quoting the line from the *De nuptiis* that Elton would later re-employ, he was quick to observe that *litteratura* in that case no more 'means our Literature' than the 'historic part' of grammar, in Martianus's sense, meant 'our historic' (I, 349–52).

<sup>16</sup> Potter, *The Muse in Chains: A Study in Education*, pp. 126–39. For primary and secondary sources on Saintsbury's life, career and influence, see now Alan Bell, 'Saintsbury, George Edward Bateman', revising the earlier (1949) notice by D. Nichol Smith.

Government College of Lahore, the consummately Latin letters of Erasmus stowed safely in his baggage.

As several decades of scholarship have made ever plainer, the belatedness of the creation of a chair (in 1885) and then of an honours school in English Literature at Oxford University had everything to do with the traditional prestige of classical 'letters' in that most self-assuredly unprovincial of British centres of learning.<sup>17</sup> Much of the resistance to 'Lit. Ang.' in Oxford clearly stemmed from unease about the different values attaching to the respective L-words in *Litterae Humaniores* on the one hand and English (or any other) Literature on the other. One of the more lucid statements on the issue was made by Stubbs's successor in the Regius Chair of Modern History, Edward Freeman, who was closely involved in the very public, often acrimonious debates about the first appointment to the Merton Chair of English Literature and the foundation of a School of Modern Languages, if not also of 'Literatures', to which English might have belonged. By 'literature', wrote Freeman, reflecting on the controversy in an article for the *Contemporary Review* in 1887:

Some of us certainly meant such a study of books in English, French, or any of the languages concerned, as we were used to in the case of Greek and Latin books in the old school of *Litterae Humaniores*. That is, we meant a study of the books written in any language in connexion with the history and philology of that language.<sup>18</sup>

Others just as certainly meant something else — namely,

if we rightly understand them, the reading of books, the criticism of books, the finding out everything about the writers of books, what they did, what they thought, anything that can better make one understand the books and the writers; but all essentially as a matter of taste.

<sup>17</sup> Still fundamental is Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies*, partly recapitulated and revised in Palmer, 'English'. See further Doyle, 'The Hidden History of English Studies'; Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism*, pp. 59–85; Court, *Institutionalizing English Literature*; Martin, 'Criticism and the Academy', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, VII: *Modernism and the New Criticism*, ed. by Litz, Menand, and Rainey (2000), pp. 269–321, beginning with the conclusion of Saintsbury's *History of Criticism*; Collini, *Common Reading*, pp. 257–67 ('The Completest Mode: The Literary Critic as Hero'). There is a useful collection of documents in Bacon, ed., *The Nineteenth-Century History of English Studies*.

<sup>18</sup> By 'old school' Freeman meant *Lit. Hum.* before a statute of 1850 confined literary and linguistic studies mainly to the first part of the course, known as classical 'Moderations', and established 'Greats', with its concentrations on philosophy and ancient history, as the second. See Walsh, 'The Zenith of Greats'.

Such scholarship as may be entailed by this practice of 'criticism'

is something graceful and elegant, something that cultivates the taste, something which may even imply a good deal of work of its own kind, only work of a different kind from that either of the comparative philologist [*sic*] or of the historical student of language.<sup>19</sup>

The Balliol classicist and philosopher R. L. Nettleship, who was to be a supporter of the new school, put the matter even more succinctly in a letter to A. C. Bradley, Professor of English Literature at Liverpool and a former student of his. The discussions about the future study of 'English' at Oxford, he remarked,

make me feel how very little the classics owe their present position in education to their being *literature*, for the first thing the ordinary person says is, 'For heaven's sake don't let us murder Shakespeare, etc., by treating them as we treat Aeschylus and Sophocles.'<sup>20</sup>

Such was the climate in Oxford when P. S. Allen was an undergraduate. So it would remain for a while longer. Under these conditions, to claim Erasmus's letters for 'history', as we have seen Allen do, rather than leaving them to 'elegant literature' was to make a gesture open to only one obvious construction.

In Edinburgh, as at Liverpool and other 'provincial' seats of learning, things had for some time been ordered better, or at least quite differently.<sup>21</sup> In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature in 1895, Saintsbury could confidently define his task as that of expounding and illustrating

those common principles of literary art which are found alike in Aristophanes and Swift, in Aeschylus and Shakespeare. For the City of Literature is a true — and if not the only true yet the only uncontested — city in the world; and its municipal regulations bind Englishman and Frenchman, Greek of Athens and Scotsman of Edinburgh, with a yoke at once gratefully observed by the free man and irresistible by the rebel.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Bacon, *The Nineteenth-Century History of English Studies*, pp. 285–86.

<sup>20</sup> Cited by Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies*, p. 83.

<sup>21</sup> The crucial role of the Scottish universities in promoting 'English studies', already well seen by Potter (see *The Muse in Chains: A Study in Education*, pp. 107–14 on Hugh Blair [1718–1810] as 'Father of Lit. Ang.' and, before him, Adam Smith), has been closely studied in more recent work: Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*; Crawford, ed., *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*.

<sup>22</sup> Cited by Elton, 'George Edward Bateman Saintsbury', p. 335.

Observing that the lecturer proclaims a City of Literature rather than an enduring Republic of Letters, we may wonder where Erasmus stands among its citizens. Saintsbury's answer is set out with all the requisite detail, and not a little confusion, in a book on *The Earlier Renaissance* (1901) for a series that he edited on 'Periods of European Literature', and again with greater emphasis at the beginning of the second volume of his great *History of Criticism*, published in 1902.

### *Erasmus Exclusus et Redux*

Exceptionally, the section of Saintsbury's *History* given over to 'Renaissance Criticism' opens with a chapter on a single author. 'Introductory — Erasmus' is its title. It is not one of the work's 'interchapters'; the interchapter between the medieval and Renaissance sections comes at the end of the previous volume. Nor is it chronologically introductory to all that follows, since the main narrative of the Renaissance begins (in a later chapter) with Italian poet-critics of the early Quattrocento. Apparently Erasmus defeats the larger scheme of the work. Saintsbury admits as much. And yet, he says,

it would [...] be a glaring omission if the critical position of Erasmus [...] were not set forth at some length. Standing as he does, the most eminent literary figure of Europe on the bridge of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, nothing if not critical as he is in his general temperament, and on the textual and exegetical, if not the strictly literary side of the Art, one of its great historical figures — his absence from this gallery would be justly regarded as inexcusable. And if his voluminous work does not yield us very much within the more special and fully enfranchizing lines of our system, it might be regarded as sufficient answer to say that the imperfection of the vernaculars, his own concentration on particular forms of Biblical and patristic text-criticism, and that peculiar cosmopolitanism which made him practically of no country at all, served to draw him away from a practice [viz., of literary criticism] in which he would, but for the circumstances and conditions, have certainly indulged.

Strange apology for a 'critic' whose greatness is at once unquestioned and unfounded! We are already a long way from the platitudes of the closely contemporary *CHEL*. There is more, and stranger, to come:

It may, however, be doubted whether Erasmus would ever have made a capital figure as a purely literary critic. Very great man of letters as he was, and almost wholly literary as were his interests, those interests were suspiciously directed towards the applied rather than the pure aspects of literature—were, in short, *per se* rather scientific than literary proper. [...] It is almost enough to read the *Adagia* and

*phthegmata* [...] to see how much there is left out which a literary critic *pur sang* could not but have said.<sup>23</sup>

All things, we are to believe, conspired against Erasmus the potentially great man of 'literature': his times, his temperament, his interests and — not least or last — his works. It would be hard to imagine a more calculatedly or innocently self-frustrating introductory gambit than this one for 'Renaissance Criticism'.

A century on, Saintsbury's Erasmus can now shed his mantle of oddity to appear for what he was in 1902: namely, at once a partial prefiguration and a troubling counter-instance of the secular priesthood of critics ecstatically envisaged in the closing pages of the *History of Criticism*.<sup>24</sup> Erasmus, the Renaissance 'man of letters' *par excellence* was *all but* what a modern critic ought to be: 'wholly literary' but — alas! — not 'strictly literary', turned towards the old sacred texts of Bible and Fathers rather than the new sacred texts of the national vernaculars, without even a country to call his own, favouring the 'scientific' and 'applied aspects of literature' over the 'properly' and 'purely' literary one.<sup>25</sup>

We might suppose that there would have been other humanist literati of Erasmus's age or a little earlier, poets and critics less dedicated than he to the revival of specifically Christian and biblical-exegetical traditions, who could more nearly embody what Saintsbury, in his late Romantic, Victorian way, was bound to understand as the holy essence of 'literature'. Not at all. Those other humanists were the real villains of the piece. According to Saintsbury, it was mainstream, Italian-style humanism which, by its strident rejection of all that was most creative in the vernacular poetic traditions of medieval Europe and its eagerness to

<sup>23</sup> Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, II, 10–11.

<sup>24</sup> Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, III, 607–10.

<sup>25</sup> For the purity of 'literature' and its distinctness from other — notably, more 'applied' — kinds of literate expression, see Saintsbury's defence of his position in the preface to the same volume of his *History of Criticism*: 'A friend who is at once friendly, most competent, and of a different complexion in critical thought, objected to me that I "treat literature as something by itself". I hastened to admit the impeachment, and to declare that this is the very postulate of my book. That literature can be *absolutely* isolated is, of course, not to be thought of; nothing human can be absolutely isolated from the general conditions of humanity, and from the other functions and operations thereof. But in that *comparative* isolation and separate presentation which Aristotle meant by his caution against confusion of kinds, I do thoroughly believe. With which profession of faith [...] I must leave the book to its fate' (II, vi). Thus articulated, Saintsbury's critical faith is appreciably more than Aristotelian. Whereas Aristotle was content to separate poetic *genera* according to their different media, objects, and modes of *mimesis*, his twentieth-century imitator would make a single, quasi-autonomous *genus* of all 'literature'.



impose classical norms on all areas of literary activity, delayed the emergence of 'true' critical doctrine by two and a half centuries at least. The appeal of Erasmus to the author of the *History of Criticism* was as a lonely exception to the iron rule of Renaissance neo-classicizing poetics with its spurious doctrines of imitation and distracting taxonomies of genre. That is why he was willing to make him such an improbable doorman to the Raphaelite *stanze* of the palace of Renaissance Criticism, where he ushers in a 'literary' theory-and-practice launched before his time, that would prevail in spite of him, and that led directly — in Saintsbury's view, disastrously — to seventeenth-century French neo-classicism and its English disciples, beginning with Dryden.

In a footnote, Saintsbury lamented that Erasmus was then, in 1902, 'still only readable as a whole, or in combination of his really important literary work, in the folios of Beatus Rhenanus (8 vols, Basle, 1540–41) or Le Clerc (10 vols, Lyons [*recte* Leiden], 1703–06)'. 'It is a thousand pities', he went on, 'that this more important literary work has not been re-edited together accessibly and cheaply'.<sup>26</sup> The emphasis is eloquent: 'in combination of his *really important* literary work [...] *this more important* literary work'. Despite all the facts as they appeared to him, Saintsbury was contriving to refashion Erasmus into some semblance of a (modern) literary figure. His thousand pities at the lack of a suitable edition lends bibliographical pathos to a hopeless quest. For a fleeting instant, it could seem as if another Erasmus might yet be discovered, could we but read this author's writings in their *proper* combination: as if the *Opera omnia*, duly re-edited and re-ordered, might one day be found to contain, concealed within them, the truly 'literary' — as well as 'critical' — oeuvre of a lost Renaissance.

For it is not just the critic *manqué* that Saintsbury seeks vainly after in the folios of Beatus Rhenanus or Jean Le Clerc.<sup>27</sup> We have only to glance at his book on *The Earlier Renaissance* to realize that it was Erasmus's personal contribution to 'literature', even more than his critical sense of it, that he wished if possible to assert. In general, Saintsbury finds very little in humanist Latin — or humanism more generally — to satisfy his high expectations of 'literature'. The Italians, as always with him, fare worst. Why, he asks, did they not write in Tuscan? The Northern humanists at least had the excuse that their vernaculars were less well

<sup>26</sup> Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, II, 10, n. 1.

<sup>27</sup> The vanity of the search is confirmed by the anthology that Saintsbury produced for an American publisher while still engaged on the *History of Criticism*: Saintsbury, *Loci Critici*. This work — ancestor of a numerous race of anthologies of literary criticism and theory for students on both sides of the Atlantic — carries the reader from Boethius via Dante to Vida and his fellow 'Italian Critics of the Sixteenth Century', without so much as a word of Erasmus.



developed. What a 'horrible calamity it would have been to European literature in the strictest sense, as well as to European culture in the widest, if Erasmus had written in Dutch!' <sup>28</sup> Here again we note the powerful presumption in favour of Erasmus's long-term contribution to European literature. But where exactly was the 'literature' in the work of Erasmus himself? Saintsbury lists the letters and a handful of other works (*Moria*, *Adagia*, *Apophthegmata*, *Ciceronianus*, *Colloquia*) as worthy of attention in the present context, further stipulating that 'Erasmus should never be read in any language but his own Latin, which is a perfectly living tongue and as easy as possible.' <sup>29</sup> Only the *Colloquies*, however, detain him for more than a sentence or two and even there the best things are admitted to be 'still somewhat in the outskirts, in the applied departments of literature proper'. In the end, the strongest claim that Saintsbury is willing to make is that the *Colloquies* took 'immense strides [...] in the direction of the *two great literary kinds* wherein modern literature was to make progress as compared with the ancient — the drama and the novel'. <sup>30</sup> Though fierce against the neo-classicist tendency to conform modern literature to ancient genres, Saintsbury was thus only too ready to commit the reverse kind of violence and judge past texts by their conformity to present canons and tastes. If Erasmus was to be saved from the general condemnation of humanist Latin authors as backward-looking and fated to oblivion, it would be for no better reason than that he now and again sketched a scene for Shakespeare, Defoe, Scott, or the author of *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

As Allen set about securing his author as a source for history in the age of Stubbs, so Saintsbury dreamt of the figure Erasmus might have cut in the annals of a 'literature' unforeseen by anyone before the end of the eighteenth century. Allen will be forgiven his anachronisms many times in return for his edition. Does Saintsbury's counter-historical Erasmus hold anything for us a hundred years on? It may, I think, if we continue to make due allowance for its time and our own.

### *Literary Work, Life-Work, 'Lucubrationes'*

As much as any of the classicizing critics whom he pilloried, Saintsbury held fast to a theory of 'literary' or rhetorical kinds or genres. In this he was fully representative of the later nineteenth-century science of 'literature' in both its critical

<sup>28</sup> Saintsbury, *The Earlier Renaissance*, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Saintsbury, *The Earlier Renaissance*, p. 77, n. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Saintsbury, *The Earlier Renaissance*, p. 81, emphasis added.

and historical modes. 'Literature' in that context was routinely *defined* in generic terms, as comprising poetry, drama, the novel, and other prose fiction, plus certain kinds of reputedly 'non-fictional' prose. C. S. Lewis's mid-twentieth-century history of sixteenth-century English literature 'excluding drama' could still exhibit the theory in practice and in no apparent need of justification. But the challenge would soon come. If the period from the 1940s to the mid-1960s can now be seen as that of the ascendancy of systematic or totalizing accounts of literature and their corresponding critical practices, be they comparatist, formalist (including New Critical), rhetoricist (including neo-Aristotelian), structuralist or mythicist, the two decades that followed were no less clearly marked by a large-scale loss of confidence in the same, at least within the 'literary' (or increasingly 'post-literary') academy. By the early 90s, to the delight of some and dismay of others, it had become much harder to sustain a faith in literature as a distinct and relatively stable ontological category or, in Saintsbury's friend's phrase, as 'something by itself'.<sup>31</sup> As the suprageneric genre of 'literature' came increasingly under suspicion, so the very concept of 'genre' took on a new salience in critical and theoretical discourse across a broad front.

An early intervention from the side of Renaissance scholarship was made by Alastair Fowler in his 1982 study of *Kinds of Literature*. Fowler sought to preserve the general category of 'literature' by positing its long-term mutability, represented by him in terms of changing generic configurations. A more radical stance was taken by Michel Beaujour in his contribution to an international colloquium on genre in 1979. Beaujour pointed to the renewed interest manifested by post-structuralist theorists in totalizing ideas of 'literature' or 'the book,' and set this in a historical relation to Renaissance visions of a single, transcendent discourse — what Rosalie Colie, citing a text of Cicero, had dubbed the *genus universum* and translated as the realm of '[literate] culture as a whole'.<sup>32</sup> All the scholars

<sup>31</sup> See n. 25 above. A bibliography of these developments would be immense. One symptomatic text for the reaction of the dismayed is Kernan, *The Death of Literature*. Kernan writes from deep within the (old) North Atlantic consensus in 'English' literary-critical and literary-historical scholarship, which had its long heyday around mid-century. Without meaning to be literature's undertaker, he contributed to a growing awareness of the instability or 'constructedness' of the concept, in Kernan, *The Imaginary Library*, and Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters, and Samuel Johnson*, reissued in 1989 as *Samuel Johnson and the Impact of Print*. In framing Johnson as one of the creators — in print — of the modern institution of 'literature,' Kernan partly anticipated the arguments and methods of Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, while also giving Carlyle his due.

<sup>32</sup> Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*; Beaujour, 'Genus Universum'; Colie, *The Resources of Kind*, pp. 19–20, citing Cicero, *De Oratore*, 3. 132: 'Num geometriam Euclide aut Archimede, num

just named were alert to the role played by Erasmus, among others, in both setting and at times unsettling the disciplinary and textual-generic expectations of early modern readers and writers. None of them, however, granted him the paradoxical precedence that he had enjoyed in Saintsbury's history of literature. Yet the special predicament in which Saintsbury once found himself with regard to Erasmus may afford a further clue to the complex long-term plot of western ideologies of written kinds, kinds of writing, and the more-than-kind that is (or has been) literature.

Thanks to Allen in the first place, no-one in the last century has been obliged to search out Erasmus's 'literary work' solely in 'the folios of Beatus Rhenanus or Le Clerc'. That is to say, we no longer habitually confront the works of Erasmus, *as a whole*, in the form and order closest to their author's own design.<sup>33</sup> Le Clerc already innovated in significant ways — as, for example, by endeavouring to arrange Erasmus's letters in chronological order. Allen went further in the same direction, with consequences for our readerly and historical perception of Erasmus that Lisa Jardine (in *Erasmus, Man of Letters* and related studies) has skilfully elucidated. There is no sign that Saintsbury for his part read very far in Erasmus's letters in any arrangement. Even had he done so, we might doubt whether, without the advantages of Allen's edition, he would have been able to take the step that Jardine took almost a century later, in order to see that, very great 'man of letters' though he unquestionably was, Erasmus grew to be so partly by dictating the sense in which such terms would be applied to him.

musicam Damone aut Aristoxeno, num ipsas litteras Aristophane aut Callimacho tractante tam discerptas fuisse, ut nemo genus universum complecteretur atque ut alius aliam sibi partem in qua elaboraret seponeret?' ('When Euclid and Archimedes expounded geometry, Damon and Aristoxenus music, and Aristophanes and Callimachus the very letter of texts, were the subjects so parcelled out that no-one embraced this kind of learning as a whole but each marked off a part for his special labour?') The speaker is Crassus, upholder of the Greek ideal of a general education for the Roman orator. For an assessment of what was at stake in such matters for Erasmus and his fellow humanist educators, and may still be at stake for those who read, write, and teach partly after their example, see Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, pp. 210–20, referring to the same dialogue of Cicero.

<sup>33</sup> For this design see Erasmus's description and enumeration of his works in the letter of 1523 to Johann von Botzheim (Allen I, pp. 1–46; trans. in *CWE* 9, as Letter 1341A), and in that of 1530 to Hector Boece (Ep. 2283 = Allen VIII, pp. 372–77; cf. *CWE* 24, 694–702 for the catalogue), with the editors' prolegomena in *ASD* I-1, pp. vii–xviii and *CWE* 24, xi–xviii, and especially Reedijk, *Tandem bona causa triumphat*, partly supplying the want of Reedijk's unpublished 1969 Lyell Lectures at Oxford.

Reading and re-reading Erasmus after Allen, Jardine could turn both a more 'historical' and a more 'literary' eye on the progressive elaboration of the construct that became the *Opus epistolarum*. Writing at a moment of exceptionally lively interaction between historicizing accounts of 'literature' and rhetoricizing (or broadly 'literary') accounts of historiography,<sup>34</sup> she would have no use for the early twentieth-century editor's over-nice distinction between letters 'regarded mainly as literature' and letters regarded as historical documents. Whatever reasons Erasmus himself may have had in 1529 for *not* arranging the contents of the *Opus epistolarum* in chronological order of composition,<sup>35</sup> Jardine provided his modern readers with compelling reasons to observe the chronology of his letters and letter-collections as they were originally issued in print. Above all, she showed how Erasmus's epistolary performances were contrived — and repeatedly revised — as part of a more general, indeed collaborative, effort to impart a controlling sense to what Allen called his 'life-work'.<sup>36</sup> Thanks to Jardine, it is now easier to understand why Erasmus stipulated (in 1523) that the third volume of his collected *opera* should include not just 'familiar' letters but also a selection of dedicatory prefaces (*praefationes aliquot dedicatorias*) to his various publications, especially such of them as might otherwise fall by the wayside. His compiled correspondence would itself form an extended internal preface to a multi-faceted work-in-progress that would finally be complete — or as complete as Erasmus and his executors, could ever make it — in several volumes or *ordines* published after his death.

When the posthumous edition of Erasmus's writings duly appeared (9 vols, Basel, 1538–40) it was duly titled *Opera omnia*, like so many other Renaissance collections of a broadly comparable kind. But the tombstone that the same executors commissioned for their author and that stands to this day in the cathedral at Basel preserves another term for 'collected [literary] works', long favoured by Erasmus himself, namely *lucubrationes*.<sup>37</sup> We recall that Erasmus in his last will

<sup>34</sup> For insightful commentary on the latter tendency, see Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, the work of an intellectual historian of the 'pre-modern' period, sensitive to recent developments in 'literary' studies.

<sup>35</sup> See n. 13 above.

<sup>36</sup> Allen, 'Erasmus' Life-Work', pp. 134–66, a piece that can now be instructively re-read (in the light of Jardine's work) with Allen, 'Erasmus' Relations with his Printers', a paper reprinted posthumously in Allen, *Erasmus: Lectures and Wayfaring Sketches*, pp. 109–37.

<sup>37</sup> Photograph, line-drawing, and transcription of the epitaph in Major, 'Die Grabstätte des Erasmus', pp. 299–315; first printed by Erasmus's heir, Boniface Amerbach, in *Catalogi duo operum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, p. 117; also in Allen XI, p. 356. Lines 14–16 refer to the

and testament made no provision for his authorial *Nachleben*, whereas in an earlier document (written in his own hand and sealed with the Terminus device in 1527) he had devoted several lines to financial and other arrangements for 'the publishing of [his] works [...] by [his] heir and executors'. 'Let them see to it', he had said there, 'that all my literary productions (*omnes lucubrationes meas*) are printed by Johann Froben, if that is possible, or [if not] by someone else, elegantly and with as much dignity as possible, arranged in volumes as I have indicated in the catalogue [of my works]'.<sup>38</sup> The story of how Erasmus came to make these stipulations for a posthumous edition of his works, how he was led to revoke them six years later (in a second will no longer extant) and how, despite failing to make any further explicit provision for the publication of his *Lucubrationes*, he still counted on his friends and supporters in Basel to see that such a thing eventually came to pass, was conjecturally reconstructed by Cornelis Reedijk in the late 1960s, just in time for the Amsterdam edition of Erasmus's *Opera omnia* to receive an authorial sanction that it might otherwise have seemed to lack.<sup>39</sup> There is no need to go over that ground again here. I have argued elsewhere for the importance of the concept and terminology of *lucubratio* or 'literary night-work' in the articulation of Erasmus's ideas about his own authorial activity and publishing persona. His distinctive use of this lucubratory idiom, I have suggested, is one sign of a strategic accommodation on his part between the 'classicizing' poetics of Italian humanism and the more literally prosaic, less classical genres (or, classically speaking, *non-genres*) of the 'patristic', biblical-exegetical revival to which he had committed himself by the turn of the century. Already in the *Lucubratiunculae* of 1503, Erasmus put himself forward 'as a humanist poet for whom poetry and humanism [...] represent[ed] a multigeneric, ultimately theological enterprise of textual instruction, conducted chiefly through print and largely in prose'.<sup>40</sup>

Why and how did the particular, ancient idiom of *lucubratio* lend itself to Erasmus's re-christening and Christianization of humanist canons of authorship, and what were the literary-historical consequences of his action?

deathless memory which Erasmus 'purchased for himself by his published works', [*quam*] *sibi editis Lucubrationibus comparavit*.

<sup>38</sup> Allen VI, p. 504, ll. 43–48.

<sup>39</sup> Reedijk, 'Erasmus' Final Modesty'; see also n. 33 above.

<sup>40</sup> Vessey, 'Erasmus' Lucubrations', p. 111. See also Vessey, 'Erasmus' Lucubrations and the Renaissance Life of Texts', especially pp. 43–49.

### *Catalogues of a Universal Genre: Jerome, Trithemius, Erasmus*

Of the hundreds of living persons mentioned in Erasmus's correspondence and so rating an entry in a modern biographical register of his contemporaries, only one has any serious claim to have influenced his lucubrology. He is at first sight an unlikely candidate for the honour. Johannes Trithemius, sometime abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Sponheim near Kreuznach in the diocese of Mainz, squeaks in among the *Contemporaries of Erasmus* on the strength of a single disparaging reference by Erasmus to his cabbalistic compilation, the *Steganographia*.<sup>41</sup> (Here was a man who had debated with the original Dr Faustus!) But Erasmus knew more about Trithemius, man and work, than his letters by themselves let on. One text of the abbot's that he knew and used was his directory of Christian writers, the *Liber de scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*,<sup>42</sup> first published by Amerbach at Basel in 1494 and frequently reprinted (sometimes with additions) in the following decades. This was the incunabular culmination of a Christian bio-bibliographical tradition that originated in the late fourth century with Jerome's *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, also known as *De viris illustribus*. Jerome opened his catalogue with St Peter and closed it with himself. His continuators, beginning with Gennadius of Marseilles in the later fifth century, tended to follow his example.<sup>43</sup> Trithemius is no exception. His book ends with a modestly proposed but comprehensive account of his own writings or, as he calls them, his *lucubrationes*.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> CEBR, III, 344–46.

<sup>42</sup> For the presence of this work in Erasmus's library, see now Vanautgaerden, 'Item ein schöne Bibliothec mit eim Register', p. 103, nr 236. There are frequent references to Trithemius's notice on Augustine in the apparatus of Erasmus's edition of that church father.

<sup>43</sup> Blum, 'Die Literaturverzeichnung im Altertum und Mittelalter'; Rouse and Rouse, 'Bibliography Before Print', reprinted in Rouse and Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*; Sharpe, *Titulus: Identifying Medieval Latin Texts*, pp. 117–26, 281–84. On Erasmus's own edition of the bibliographies of Jerome and Gennadius, see Vessey, 'Vera et aeterna monumenta'.

<sup>44</sup> I refer to a 1512 Paris edition, P. S. Allen's copy of which is now in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Allen c. 98. The title-page reads: 'Disertissimi viri Iohannis de Tritthenheim abbatis Spanhemensis De Scriptoribus ecclesiasticis collectanea: Additis nonnullorum ex recentioribus vitis & nominibus: qui scriptis suis hac nostra tempestate clariores evaserunt. Paris: Iehan Petit, 1512'. Explaining in a preface why he has seen fit to include 'many exponents of secular letters among writers of the church (*ecclesiasticos scriptores*)', the compiler justifies himself on the grounds that such persons have assisted the church by their 'literary labours' (*suis lucubrationibus*), since no-one can be considered properly learned in the divine scriptures who does not also have some acquaintance with secular disciplines (*saecularis litteraturae*) (sigs. aa<sup>9</sup>v–10). Trithemius's notice on himself begins: 'Iohannes abbas monasterii sancti Martini episcopi in Spanhem: ordinis divi



*Lucubrationes* is in fact this writer’s habitual synonym for literary *opera*, a classical locution that might have been out of place in any previous such catalogue since Jerome’s but is less startling in the work of one who combines traditional monastic and new-fangled humanistic interests in the ways that Trithemius does. Its sometimes precarious balance of old and new is part of what makes Trithemian bibliographical method interesting at this distance.<sup>45</sup> On the side of novelty, his separate catalogue of famous German writers, published at Mainz in 1495, has been claimed as the first ‘national’ literary history of the modern era.<sup>46</sup> The full title is *Cathalogus illustrium virorum Germaniam suis ingeniis et lucubrationibus omnifariam exornantium* (‘A Catalogue of the Famous Men Who by their Wits and Writings Have Adorned Germany in Every Way’). On the side of tradition, meanwhile, can be counted the many works of specifically religious history, including a species of Benedictine literary historiography, for which Trithemius was known both in and after his own time.<sup>47</sup>

The same hindsight that identifies the national, non-ecclesiastical criteria of the catalogue of German writers as presages of modernity also allows us to recognize the *Liber de scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* as in key respects a work of the last ditch. It is true that Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio are included in it, but compared with a work of genuinely humanistic literary historiography such as Sicco

patris Benedicti: Moguntinae diocesis natione teutonicus: patria Mosellanus: ex villa Trittenham Treverensis diocesis oriundus: quamvis non sim dignus quod nomen meum cum scriptoribus ecclesiasticis poneretur: propter ingenii paupertatem: tamen amicis urgentibus compulsus sum in fine huius catalogi: *mearum quoque lucubrationum titulos et exordia ponere*: exemplo divorum patrum: Hieronymi: Gennadii: Honorii presbyteri Augustodunensis: & Sigebert monachi Gemblacensis: qui se quoque in fine suorum tractatum de his ipsis rebus editorum posuerunt. Scripsi ergo praeter hoc opus etiam subiecta [...]’ (f. 210<sup>v</sup>, emphasis added).

<sup>45</sup> O’Donnell, ‘Trithemius, McLuhan, Cassiodorus’, substantially reproduced (minus the scholarly apparatus) in O’Donnell, *Avatars of the Word*, pp. 71–91. See now also Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, pp. 1–7; and Grafton, *Worlds Made by Words*, pp. 56–78.

<sup>46</sup> Blum, ‘Die Literaturverzeichnis im Altertum und Mittelalter’, cols 197–202. Cf. Chartier, *The Order of Books*, trans. by Cochrane, pp. 71–72, recognizing Trithemius’s catalogue as the first of its type to be defined by ‘a national territory’, albeit not that of a nation-state.

<sup>47</sup> These include the treatise *De viris illustribus ordinis sancti Benedicti*, subsequently re-issued in Johannes Trithemius, *Opera pia et spiritualia*, ed. by Busaeus, where the ranks of the Benedictine Order are swollen by the inclusion of such luminaries as Cassiodorus, Dionysius Exiguus, Gregory the Great, Leander of Seville, Gregory of Tours, and the Venerable Bede. If anyone before Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, is to be credited with the idea of a continuous, unified tradition of Benedictine ‘literary’ spirituality extending from Benedict of Nursia to Jean Mabillon, it is probably Trithemius.

Polenton's *Scriptorum illustrium latinae linguae libri*, which predates it by half a century,<sup>48</sup> Trithemius's bibliography comes almost straight out of the ark. Even its form was outdated: more than two centuries had elapsed since anyone had last seen fit to 'modernize' Jerome's catalogue.<sup>49</sup> Monastic in ambience, scriptural if not actually scribal in focus, pan-European in scope, Trithemius's *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* is the last testament — before the works of Erasmus — of a thousand-year-old Latin Christian literary culture centred on the Bible.<sup>50</sup> It may seem fitting that it should be Trithemius who, so far as we can tell, was the first to treat the medieval *Glossa Ordinaria* or standard commentary on the Vulgate as a single-author work and ascribe it to that indefatigable Carolingian monk Walafrid Strabo.<sup>51</sup> For all its up-to-the-minute exhaustiveness, Trithemius's bibliography aspired to a similar unity and universality.

Although the Gloss and its Postillators would encumber the presses for a few decades more, as models of Christian literary activity they belonged to a fast-receding past. Erasmus, beginning with his Latin and Greek New Testament or *Novum instrumentum* of 1516, would be one of their despatchers. Publishing Jerome's original *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* in the same year, he made it as plain as he decently could that he was taking over where Jerome, as a 'classical'-Christian author after his own heart, had left off, and that precious little of what had been committed to writing in the intervening period was of any lasting value.<sup>52</sup> It was partly bluff, of course. We know now how Erasmus ransacked the Gloss and

<sup>48</sup> Sicco takes the crucial step of replacing Jerome's unified chronological sequence of authorial notices with a *genre*-based classification, preparing the way for the sequence of single-genre, catalogue-style histories that begins with the *De poetis latinis* of Petrus Crinitus (Firenze, 1505): Vessey, 'Latin Literary History after Saint Jerome'; Moss, 'Humanists and the Invention of Literary History'.

<sup>49</sup> Trithemius's nearest predecessor (and one of his sources) was the author now known as Henry of Brussels, a monk of Affligem, who produced his catalogue c. 1270; the work was previously attributed to Henry of Gent.

<sup>50</sup> In the preface to his *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* Jerome had defined his field as comprising all those 'qui memoriae aliquid prodiderunt *de scripturis sanctis*' ('who published anything memorable concerning the Holy Scriptures'). While he and his successors gave this criterion the broadest possible interpretation, it remained implicitly the sole *generic* criterion for their catalogues.

<sup>51</sup> *Biblia latina cum Glossa ordinaria*, ed. by Fröhlich and Gibson, I, xxiv. The attribution appears in both *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* and the *Catalogus virorum illustrium Germaniae*.

<sup>52</sup> Vessey, 'Vera et aeterna monumenta', and Vessey, 'Cities of the Mind', pp. 54–57. For the general disposition, see Bejczy, *Erasmus and the Middle Ages*, pp. 104–28.



later medieval authorities.<sup>53</sup> But even as bluff it was astonishingly successful. As a monastic-humanist author, Erasmus would pull off a version of the stunt that Trithemius had first credited to Walafrid Strabo and then attempted himself: that of resuming, assuming, and indeed — in Erasmus’s case, if not Trithemius’s — *consuming* an entire tradition of thought and literate expression in his personal oeuvre.

As we have seen, Trithemius used the term *lucubrationes* to refer to the sum of a given author’s written work, always considered as part of a larger, superior totality. His inventory of ecclesiastical writers was the terminal expression, on the eve of the Reformation, of the plenary text or scripture of Latin Christianity, a literary construct first collectively imagined by ascetic freelances and monk-bishops of late Roman antiquity, Jerome pre-eminent among them.<sup>54</sup> In that Christian-Latin textual universe, every individual’s *lucubrationes* — be he now Augustine, Aquinas, Dante, Petrarch, or a relatively obscure figure like Johannes Trithemius — ideally formed part of the same vast web of orthodox and implicitly Bible-centred learning. There was a single community of sacred lucubration and, as it were, a single literary oeuvre or *genus universum*, in which each and every individually or collectively authored *opus* was theoretically subsumed. This was the universe of texts in which Erasmus the Augustinian monk was trained up, from which he never disengaged himself, and which his own *Lucubrationes* irreparably rent asunder. If we had to assign a *terminus a quo* to the protracted event of that rupture, the year 1516, when Trithemius died, and Erasmus and Froben issued the *Novum instrumentum* and *Hieronymi opera* (with Jerome’s *Opus epistolarum* in first place), would be a natural choice.

Expanding as it did through subsequent editions, Erasmus’s ‘revised’ Latin New Testament with its parallel Greek text and apparatus of notes would constitute the sixth section of the *Opera omnia Erasmi*. For Erasmus, we infer, everything that fell into the other eight sections, along with anything of his that would not finally fit into them, was subordinate in principle to the exegesis (*enarratio*) of that supremely Christ-bearing, Christ-authored text.<sup>55</sup> *Lucubratio*, meaning

<sup>53</sup> See De Jonge, ‘Erasmus und die Glossa Ordinaria’, and the apparatus to volumes of the *Annotations* and *Paraphrases* in *ASD* and *CWE*.

<sup>54</sup> The genesis of this Latin Christian ‘literary’ field has been the main subject of my research for some years. See the *essais d’approche* in Vessey, *Latin Christian Writers in Late Antiquity*, and, for more synoptic presentations, Vessey, ‘From *Cursus* to *Ductus*’, and my ‘Introduction’ to Cassiodorus, *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning* and ‘On the Soul’, ed. and trans. by Halporn, pp. 1–101.

<sup>55</sup> Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology*; Dresden, ‘Présence d’Érasme’; Vessey, ‘Erasmus’ *Lucubrations* and the Renaissance Life of Texts’, pp. 49–51.

literary production-as-reproduction, was the suprageneric sign under which Erasmus went about the business of redacting a tradition. Once accomplished, the task would not be repeated, at least not on those terms, not under that sign. The dream of a *genus universum* would instead take other shapes, including — in the aftermath of the Enlightenment — the shape that eventually became known as Literature. (In the meantime, the non-genre of lucubration would decline to the point where its most famous English practitioner, in the early eighteenth century, was Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., otherwise known as ‘The Tatler’, purveyor of gossip and opinion to London coffee-houses.)

Strictly unverifiable though it is, the hypothesis of an Erasmian takeover of the Trithemian idiom of Christian Latin textuality helps to explain the double business to which Saintsbury found himself bound in the introduction to the second volume of his *History of Criticism*. Renowned ‘man of letters’ whose work (and Works) defeated the generic taxonomies of Italian and Italianate humanists, Erasmus must have looked like a promising subject for this English scholar’s late Romantic, Arnoldian narrative of the eventual emergence of true doctrines of literature and criticism. What Saintsbury failed or refused to recognize was the degree to which Erasmus’s works *across all genres and none* were shaped from the inside by the programme of Christian Latin ‘letters’ that he had selectively extrapolated from his favourite church fathers, beginning with Jerome. Neither the edition of the New Testament nor any of the other materials destined by Erasmus for later volumes of the *Opera omnia* were reckoned by Saintsbury to be part of his ‘more important literary work’. Inevitably, the sense of the Erasmian life-work, including its larger significance for the history of ‘letters’ and ‘literature’, eluded him.<sup>56</sup>

### *Epilogue: Erasmus and Rise of English Literary History*

A century after Saintsbury in his *History of Criticism* and Lindsay in the *CHEL* made Erasmus the theme of chapters introductory to the Renaissance (or Renascence), half a century on from Lewis’s refusal in the *OHEL* of any close connection ‘between the *renascentia* and the late sixteenth-century efflores-

<sup>56</sup> For Saintsbury, the Latin Christian exegetical and theological tradition of the Middle Ages made a blank in the history of literature and criticism; in his *History of Criticism* the next author of note after Martianus Capella was Dante (n. 15 above). The very same blank has recently been made and left by a volume designed to replace Saintsbury’s work for this period, despite its editors’ determination not to repeat the mistakes of their predecessor of a century ago: *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, 11: *The Middle Ages*, ed. by Minnis and Johnson (2005), p. 4.

cence of English literature', James Simpson began a volume for the new *Oxford English Literary History* with a chapter on 'The Melancholy of John Leland and the Beginnings of English Literary History'.<sup>57</sup> His chief exhibit was John Bale's interpolated edition of the antiquary John Leland's 'New Year's Gift' to King Henry VIII, issued in 1549 as *The Laboryouse Journey [...] of Johan Lelande*. In keeping with his own melancholy thesis about the 'cultural revolution' of the early Tudor period and its negative consequences for the valuation of England's recent (otherwise 'late medieval') literary past, Simpson portrays Leland and Bale as equally if differently torn between the profession of triumphal novelty in church and state and the concomitant need to celebrate a national tradition of 'letters' that could be represented as stretching back gloriously and without interruption to remote antiquity. At the edge of his account, just out of focus, hovers a figure of Erasmus.

Should that figure be more central? Simpson stresses the conflict of viewpoints between Leland the 'civic and literary humanist' and Bale the 'radical protestant'. For all their differences, however, both men were evidently labouring in the cultural void opened up by Erasmus's patristic-humanist *mise en suspens* of the literary community of Latin Christendom, and widened for England by the ecclesiastical policies of Henry VIII and Edward VI. In the end, as Simpson cheerfully reminds us, Leland lost his wits. Yet for as long as he had them he appears to have had as clear a view of the importance of Erasmus's oeuvre as any Englishman of his time.<sup>58</sup> Glossing the 'New Year's Gift', Bale would tendentiously invoke Erasmus's lament for the loss of early Christian literary *monumenta*.<sup>59</sup> Leland already knew without any prompting how high the stakes were for a post-Erasmian literary history. Here is how he announced his *magnum opus* to King Henry:

Wherfor I knowynge by infynyte uaryete of bokes, and assyduouse readyng of them, who hath bene learned and who hath written from tyme to tyme in this realme, have digested into .iiii. bokes, the names of them wyth their lyues and monumentes of learnynge. And to them added thys tyle, the *De viris illustribus*,

<sup>57</sup> Simpson, *1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution*.

<sup>58</sup> There are several well turned tributes to Erasmus and his English circle in the posthumously printed Leland, *Principum ac illustrium aliquot*.

<sup>59</sup> Simpson, *1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution*, p. 18, citing *A new yeares gift*, published by Bale as Leland, *The Laboryouse Journey and Serche*, sig. D4r: 'Wyth muche payne I absteyne from wepyng (sayth he in a certen Epystle) so oft as I in readyng the Cataloges of old writers, do beholde what profygthes, yea, what pusaunce [*sic*], ayde, and comfort we have lost'. I have not been able to identify the 'epistle' quoted by Bale; the same sentiment is prominently expressed in the paratexts of Erasmus's edition of Jerome: Vessey, '*Vera et aeterna monumenta*'.

folowyng the profytable example of Hierome, Gennadie, Cassidore, Seueryane, and Trittemie a late writer. But always so handlyng the matter, that I have more expacyated in this campe, than they did, as in a thyng that desyred to be somewhat at large, and to have ornature.<sup>60</sup>

On that evidence, what Richard Helgerson calls 'the Elizabethan writing of England' was already under way in the reign of Henry VIII, and the writing of a new kind of English *literary* history was integral if not fundamental to it.<sup>61</sup>

'[I]f Bale and Leland [...] constitute the beginnings of English literary studies', cautions Simpson, 'this is an accident of history, insofar as "literature" is not a discursive category to which either writer directs his bibliographical energy'.<sup>62</sup> However far off that accident still was in 1549, with a little retrospective narrowing of the eyes it can be seen waiting to happen from the moment Erasmus began his lucubrations. In Erasmus we see the consummation and crisis of a long-standing Christian *genus universum*, beyond which lay the competing universal discourses of modernity, including a discourse of Literature in which the claims of genre versus generality and of individual versus collective oeuvre were to be mysteriously mingled.

<sup>60</sup> Leland, *The Laboryouse Journey and Serche*, sig. C7<sup>v</sup>–8<sup>r</sup>. The identity of 'Severianus' (for 'Sigebert'?) is obscure. On Leland's relation to the *De viris illustribus* tradition, see Sharpe, 'The English Bibliographical Tradition', pp. 97–102.

<sup>61</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*. See also King, *English Reformation Literature*, pp. 56–76 (Bale); Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon*, pp. 51–64 (Leland and Bale).

<sup>62</sup> Simpson, *1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution*, p. 24.

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